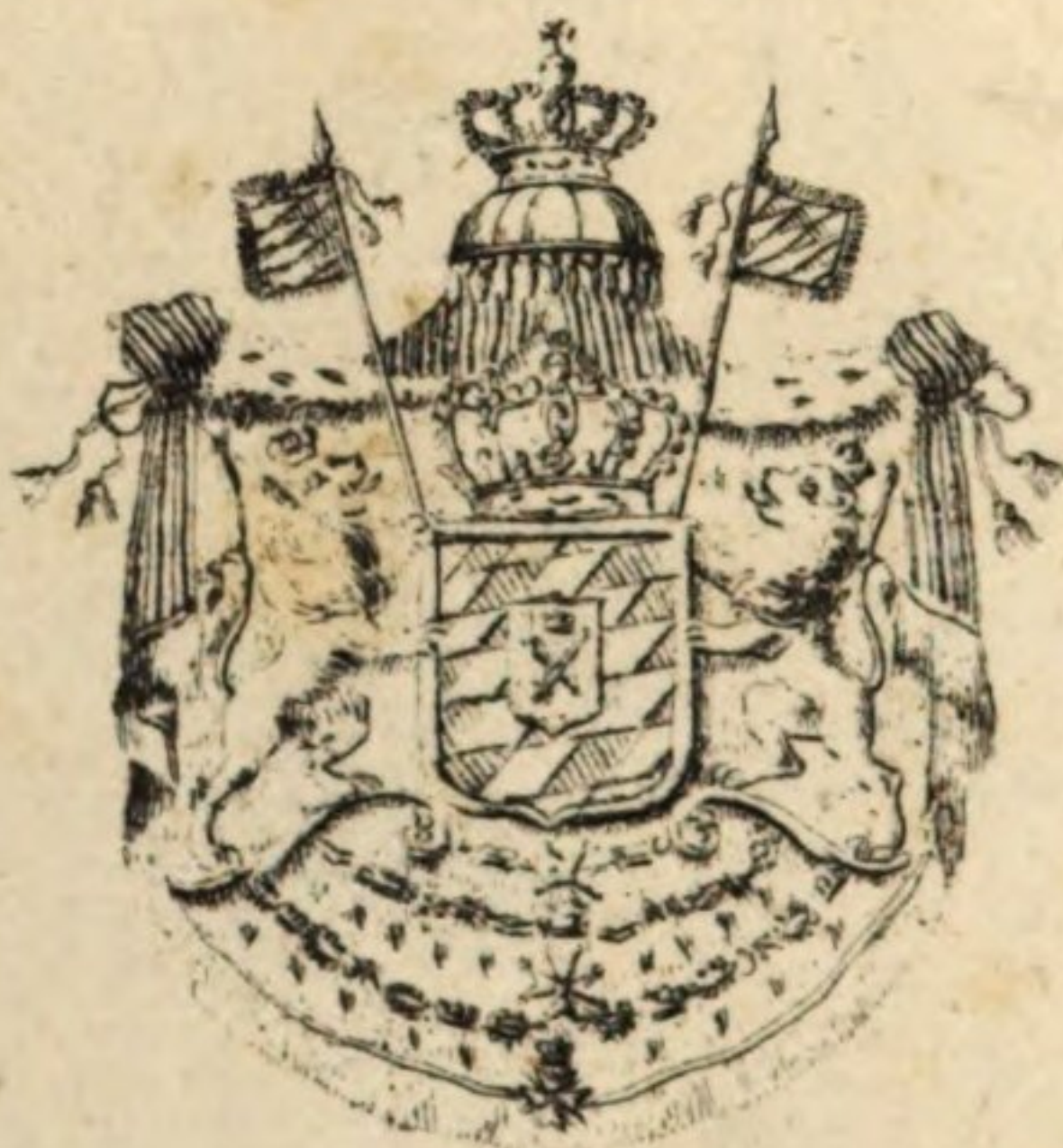




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MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, A. M.

WITH A REVIEW OF HIS

LIFE AND WRITINGS,

AND A

HISTORY OF METHODISM,

From it's Commencement in 1729, to the present time.

By JOHN HAMPSON, A. B.

V O L. III.

SUNDERLAND:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

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M E M O I R S

OF THE LIFE

OF JOHN WESLEY A.M.

BY THE REV. J. WESLEY

AND W. H. WESLEY

AND A

HISTORY OF THE METHODIST

CHURCH IN AMERICA

BY J. WESLEY A.M.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA

1807

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Executors of Mr Wesley, having taken much pains, by notices and advertisements, to prevent the circulation of these Memoirs, or any other account of Mr Wesley, than that which they are now preparing, and which is to be signed by their names, the Public are respectfully informed, that the Rev. Dr. PRIESTLEY, in a letter to a near relation of the Author, has authenticated the correspondence between the Wesleys, which is so frequently alluded to, in these pages: which authentication is gratefully acknowledged, and would have been inserted before the preface, had it not come too late for publication. This correspondence was not in Mr Wesley's possession; consequently is not to be found among his papers.—Whether the account the Executors shall publish, will be found “spurious and hasty” or not, it is too soon to determine. It is hoped, however, nothing of this sort will strike the judicious reader in the present work. Should their account be an impartial one, it is more than the world expects: and in this case, we shall certainly be not a little disappointed.

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M E M O I R S

OF THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, A. M.

C H A P. I.

PROGRESS OF METHODISM IN AMERICA
CONTINUED.

ON the arrival of Dr Coke in America, in 1784, he found the societies in a flourishing state, and considerably increased in number. One of his first efforts abroad, was in favour of the slaves; and it was determined in conference to endeavour the final abolition

of their captivity. The cause was certainly a good one ; for it was the cause of justice and humanity. But it was a delicate subject ; and to manage it with effect, required not only a degree of zeal, but a large proportion of dexterity and judgment : which indeed must always be the case, where interest is concerned.

It is true, nothing can compensate the loss of liberty ; nor is any consideration of expediency or public utility competent to sanctify the violation of justice and the rights of men. The only palliation of slavery (for it's vindication were impossible) must be found in the kind, generous behaviour of their masters. It is well known, that the condition of slaves is not uniformly the same. It varies according to the temper of the owner, and may be compared to that of subjects in an absolute government ; very tolerable,

where the sovereign is a man of wisdom and benevolence ; but if a tyrant, miserable in the extreme. The situation of slaves under some masters is, in point of comfort, superior to that of the labouring poor in Britain : and as this was the case with many of those, among whom the preachers laboured in America, we cannot entirely approve the expressions of their zeal, which, in some instances, almost amounted to intolerance. One of their leaders, when preaching the funeral sermon of a gentleman and a brother, observes, that he “ did not say any good of him,” because in this business he had been a thorn in his side ; not considering, that it is possible his character might have been truly excellent, notwithstanding this difference of judgment. Public persons have often occasion to be reminded of the advice of Hamlet to the play-

ers*; and to be admonished that, constituted as human nature is, gentleness and courtesy will do infinitely more toward the accomplishment of a favourite project, than any of those clumsy, fulminating measures, which are beneath a man of ability and discernment, and which ignorance and rashness alone are capable of adopting. We have no doubt, that zeal in a good cause, and under proper direction, is virtue; but we know too, that there are cases, in which it is a curse, as well to it's possessor, as to those who suffer from it's unseasonable explosions. Much zeal and little discernment, are the genuine characteristics of a Marplot.

The exertions of Dr Coke and his brethren, in the cause of liberty, were sometimes attended with disagreeable ef-

* "Use all gently."

fects. Some offence was the natural consequence of a tender point, not handled in the most delicate manner: and more than once his person was in danger. Several riots were excited: and one lady offered "the rioters fifty pounds, if they would give that little Doctor one hundred lashes." But the Doctor was in luck. Some of his friends were of the church militant: and a strapping colonel interposing, the vapulation did not take place. Above all, several were induced to comply with his exhortations, and a few slaves were emancipated.

The employment of the preachers on the continent was laborious; though perhaps it had it's agreements: for it has been observed, that few, who have gone over, have thought proper to return. In the course of the day, they frequently rode twenty or thirty miles through the

wildernefs, preaching twice or thrice, and fometimes to confiderable congregations. Their excursions, through immense forefts, abounding in trees of all forts and fizes, were often highly romantic. Innumerable rivers and falls of water; viftas opening to the view, in contrast with the uncultivated wild; deer now fhooting acrofs the road, and now fcouring through the woods; while the eye was frequently relieved by the appearance of orchards and plantations, and the houfes of gentlemen and farmers peeping through the trees, formed a fcenery fo various and picturesque, as to produce a variety of reflection, and prefent, we will not fay, to a philofophic eye, but to the mind of every reasonable creature, the moft fublime and agreeable images.

Their worship partook of the general simplicity. It was frequently conducted in the open air. The woods resounded to the voice of the preacher, or to the singing of his numerous congregations; while their horses, fastened to the trees, formed a singular addition to the solemnity. It was indeed a striking picture; and might naturally impress the mind with a retrospect of the antediluvian days, when the hills and vallies re-echoed the patriarchal devotions, and a Sheth or an Enosh, in the shadow of a projecting rock, or beneath the foliage of some venerable oak, delivered his primeval lectures, and was a “preacher of righteousness” to the people.

Among other agreements, may be reckoned the American hospitality, the consciousness of being well employed, and the satisfaction resulting from considerations

of public utility. As many of the preachers were men of fervent piety, this reflection would have it's full weight; and the instruction of the ignorant, and the reformation of the profligate, would be considered as the best recompence of their labours. Spreading themselves through the continent, they took in Nova Scotia, Georgia, with the principal places in both the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, and numbering upwards of forty-three thousand members of society, exclusive of about eighty itinerants, and a considerable number of local preachers, who took no circuits, but assisted occasionally, in the neighbourhood of their respective residence.

The colonists, in the infancy of methodism, conducted themselves with more propriety than our own countrymen.

There was little or no persecution, nor any thing like a riot, except in one or two instances, which have been mentioned, as the consequence of the animadversions on slavery; and even these were productive of no mischief. Not a creature was materially injured; no bones were broken, nor any lives lost; which was not the case in this country. Here many thousands of innocent people were subject to the grossest indignities, and several were eventually sacrificed to the fury of their persecutors.

While we commend the Americans for their behaviour, in opposition to the brutality of the English mobs, it may be proper to enquire into the sources of this distinction. Something of this may have arisen from similarity of sentiment. The Americans, from the first beginnings of colonization, had been accustomed to the

doctrines of the old puritans and non-conformists, which, in many respects, have a near affinity to the methodistic tenets. The origin of methodism in America was seldom, if ever attended, either under the discourses of Mr Whitefield, or Mr Wesley's preachers, with the ridiculous effects with which it was accompanied in these kingdoms. Most of the preachers, who went over to the continent, having laboured for some years in Europe, previous to their crossing the water, had exhausted their wild-fire: so that their discourses were more scriptural and rational than those of the primitive methodists. Another reason may be found in the education of the Americans. As a people, they are better cultivated than the body of the English. They are chiefly composed of merchants and a respectable yeomanry: and

there is but a small proportion of that class, so super-abundant here, which we distinguish by the term *mob*.

The only exception we have heard, to their exemption from the extravagancies, which in this country marked the infancy of methodism, is a custom they have introduced in Maryland and Virginia. Frequently, at the conclusion of a sermon, the whole congregation begin to "pray and to praise God aloud." The uproar this must create, may easily be conceived. Some, we are told, are great admirers of this species of enthusiasm, in which every man is his own minister, and one sings and another prays with the most discordant devotion. But we will not dignify such indecency with such a name. It's proper appellation is fanaticism. We hope that, for the future, religion will never appear in this coun-

try under so odious a form ; and greatly is it to be lamented, that, among the friends of christianity, any such absurdities should arise, to furnish infidels with occasions of triumph. Some people will never comprehend the distinction : but it is nevertheless true, that there is an immense gulph between religion and enthusiasm.

The generosity of the colonists kept pace with their liberality. The large and expensive buildings, which they have erected for public worship, almost exceed credibility : and several colleges are founded for the instruction of youth. How far the proposed plan, of uniting “ genuine religion and extensive learning,” will be carried into effect, time only can discover. It must materially depend on the character of the presidents and tutors, and the provision that shall

be made for their support. Men of real erudition will never be procured at low salaries ; and it is in vain to attempt establishments of this sort, without a liberal provision for the professors in every branch of science. Two of these places are called Cokesbury and Wesley College. How they are endowed, or whether they propose to obtain authority to confer degrees, we are not informed. But perhaps they are rather schools than colleges : which indeed is a circumstance to be wished, as good grammar schools are of the utmost service to the progress of literature.

From the continent Mr Wesley turned his attention to the West India Islands. In some of these, his way had been prepared by the moravians ; and several preachers being sent from the English conference in 1786, they presently form-

ed societies in Barbadoes, St. Vincent's, Dominica, St. Christopher's, Nevis, Antigua, St. Eustatius, Tortola, and St. Croix, which, in 1790, amounted to near five thousand members. The number at this period, on the continent and in the islands, was forty eight thousand, three hundred, and two, and the whole number in Europe and America, upwards of one hundred and twenty thousand, including three hundred and eighty itinerants, and thirteen or fourteen hundred local preachers. On the continent, the white people considerably exceeded the negroes: in the West Indies, the latter were superior by a large proportion. The character of the West Indians is well known. But it is worth observing, that the subjection of the negroes, and the obedience in which they are trained, must in-

culcate a docility, peculiarly favourable to the purposes of a mission.

Some of the missionaries have lately found their way to the Caribs, at St. Vincent's, which, it may be presumed, will be advantageous to the planters; and, by preserving a good understanding, will, in all probability, be the means of putting an end to the differences that have so long subsisted among them.

This people is divided into the black and yellow Caribs; the former being the descendants of the cargo of a Guinea ship, wrecked on one of the Granadilloes; the latter, the aborigines of the island. The martial spirit of these Indians, their contentions with the gentlemen of the island, and their perpetual quarrels with each other, have been long before the public. It is said, their morals are greatly corrupted, and their disaffection to the

English government much increased by their intercourse with Martinique. Of their ferocious character, a tolerable idea may be conveyed, by observing, that they constantly carry a sabre or cutlafs, and generally a loaded musket, which is ever on the cock ; for, so numerous are the broils of these people, that they are in constant dread of meeting an enemy. The consequence is, that assassinations are frequent, and their cordial and eternal animosities are piously transmitted from generation to generation.

At present, some schools are established among them, in which their children are carefully instructed in the principles of religion. This mode of instruction will be found full as useful as their public ministrations ; and heartily do we wish them success.

In January 1789, Dr Coke paid a visit to Jamaica, and gave them several sermons. As he made but a short stay, it could hardly be considered as a fair trial. Should a mission be established here, as well as in the other islands, which will probably be the case, it is hoped, it will be the means of correcting one vice at least ; and that is duelling. A savage relic of Gothic barbarity, by which all the islands have for many years been distinguished. Perhaps too, it will give some check to the spirit of luxury and dissipation ; and teach the planters, if it be found impracticable to emancipate their slaves, at least to treat them with humanity.

Among other schemes, for the propagation of methodism, it was debated in conference, whether it would not be proper to send missionaries to the East In-

dies and to the coast of Africa: but it appearing that there was no invitation from any who resided there, nor the least probability of success, this proposal was dropt. The last mission in which they have engaged, is conducted by the conference in America, and is directed to a settlement called Kentucke, on the banks of the Ohio, and on the borders of the Indian territories, near the Mississippi: and, in spite of the Indian tomahawks, several offered and were accepted for this dangerous service; which, at that time, was more so than usual, on account of a war then subsisting with this singular people. Whether these savages will ever chuse to become tame, is a question, the decision of which must be left to those unfolders of all mysteries, time and experience. What may be the talents of the preachers, and how far they are

qualified for such a service, it is not for us to say. If they possess not much knowledge, which however we do not know to be the case, it is at least certain, they are not deficient in zeal: and, without any passionate desire to imitate their example, we may at least commend their endeavours for the general good. Every good man will contemplate, with pleasure, the operation of the spirit of reformation, whether foreign or domestic; and will rejoice in every attempt to propagate christianity in the barbarous parts of the world. An attempt, which, if in any tolerable degree successful, will do infinitely more for their civilization and happiness, than all the united energies of those boasted benefactors of mankind, the philosophic infidels.

C H A P. II.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS
OF METHODISM.

IT has been shewn, that the foundations of methodism were laid at Oxford, in 1729; and about five or six years previous to Mr Whitefield's introduction to the original methodists. Some of the followers of this gentleman have supposed, because he began the practice of field-preaching, that he was the father of methodism, and that Mr Wesley, to use the elegant language of a living author, was "his quondam understrapper." But this is not accurate. Mr Whitefield was introduced to the society at Oxford

by Mr Wesley ; and it was not itinerancy, or preaching in the open air, that gave rise either to the name of methodism, or to the thing ; but rather the strict and regular deportment of a few gentlemen, who were united, at the university, in the same pursuits. Their first meetings, except on Sunday evenings, were rather literary than religious ; and their chief reading was the classics. In a little time, they applied these meetings chiefly to religious purposes : when their regular and exemplary conduct first gave them the name of methodists. On this subject the authority of Mr Wesley is decisive ; who explains it in these words : “ The regularity of their behaviour gave occasion to a young gentleman of the college to say, ‘ I think we have got a new set of methodists,’ alluding to a set of physicians, who began to flourish at

Rome about the time of Nero, and continued for several ages. The name was new and quaint. It clave to them immediately; and from that time, both those four young gentlemen, and all that had any religious connexion with them, were distinguished by the name of methodists."

Dr Trapp has observed, that when he saw Mr Law's writings, he thought these books would certainly do mischief; and the methodists appearing about that time, he considered this gentleman as their parent. Dr Warburton considers them as the offspring of Mr Law and Count Zinzendorf: while Mr Wesley dates his first religious impressions at Oxford from his acquaintance with the writings of Dr Taylor. The fact is, that all these writers had their influence: though in the genius and doctrines of methodism, we

see more distinct traits of moravianism, if not mysticism, than of the more sober divinity of Dr Taylor; whom some moderns have branded with pelagianism.

It seems to have been the general opinion, that Mr Wesley had determined, while at Oxford, to place himself at the head of a sect, and had projected his plan, long before it's execution, in the commencement of itinerancy, and the other deviations from the establishment. The motto, in one of his prints, which is supposed to have had a mystical, as well as a literal meaning; his sudden departure from the university, his voyage to America, and his journey to Germany, have concurred, with other circumstances, to confirm many in this opinion.

Some have inferred the same thing, from contrasting his sprightliness in youth

with the peculiar strictness, which followed his sudden change of principles. It is said, that in early life, he was of the sprightliest temper, “a most sensible and acute collegian, baffling every opponent by the subtilties of logic, and laughing at them for being so easily routed; a young fellow of the finest classical taste; of the most liberal and manly sentiments.” The change that took place in him was sudden and striking. From a passionate admirer of the classics, he became an adept in mysticism, and a profound student in Madam Guion and Mr Law: and on this rock, he confesses in a letter to his brother, that he had nearly split. His admiration of these writers considerably decreased during his residence at Georgia: but some think, though he disclaimed the most absurd flights of the mystics, that the impression they made

on his mind, was never entirely obliterated.

The late Mr Badcock informs us, that, in some informations he had received, he could discover “the very first spring of his enthusiasm, and was no longer puzzled in accounting for the vicissitudes of his conduct, or the variety of opinions in divinity, which he adopted :” and that by an incident in domestic life, he saw his “genius clouded, and the clearest reason muddied in the school of mysticism.”

What this incident was, we are not informed. It is much to be wished this learned and ingenious writer had been more particular in explaining it. Had he done so, the public might have formed a more accurate judgment, and either have rejected the cause assigned, as inadequate to the effect, or have admitted

it, in it's full force. As he has left us in the dark, it were in vain to form conjectures. In the letters that passed between the family about that time, most of which we have seen, there are no traces of such an incident. It is therefore to be presumed, either that the history of this event has perished by accident, or has been cautiously withheld.

As this is the case, we have no mode of judging, concerning this circumstance: nor can we form any adequate idea of Mr Wesley's original designs, but from his conduct, and his declarations. We have already given our opinion, that he had no intention to put himself at the head of a religious body, till about the year 1738: and this opinion we see no reason to retract. His determination even then seems to have been the result of a variety of circumstances, that gra-

dually occurred, and which it was impossible he should foresee: and though politicians are fond of considering the actions of public persons, as the result of projects, which, it is more than probable, never entered into their imagination, we shall not follow their example.

But let us hear Mr Wesley himself. Something had been said of these projects, by Mr Badcock: every tittle of which he absolutely disclaimed; observing, that all that had been said on this subject, however ingenious, was “a mere castle in the air;” and, insisting that the chief impression he had, during most of his time, at Oxford, was, not that of his designation to some “extraordinary work,” but simply,

“inter sylvas acadæmi quærere verum:”
and that his subsequent conduct was de-

terminated by a variety of unexpected events. For some years, his love of a college life was superior to every other consideration: nor does he seem, till he had past his thirtieth year, to have had a wish beyond it.

Being aware of the common opinion, that he laid, at an early period, the plan of his future authority, he has given a particular account of his views so late as 1738. At this time, he informs his readers, he was in “haste to return to Oxford, to bury himself in his beloved obscurity; but being detained in London, week after week, by the trustees for Georgia, he was importuned to preach in many of the churches; that, partly on account of the vast multitudes, and partly his unfashionable doctrine, he was at length shut out of all the churches; and that, not daring to be silent, after a

short struggle between honour and conscience, he made a virtue of necessity, and preached in the middle of Moorfields; that several came to him for his advice, till they increased to about a hundred, whose names he took down, that he might visit them from house to house :” and thus, he assures us, without any previous plan or design, the methodist society was first formed.

After this society commenced, and especially, when others began to be collected in different parts of the nation, it is plain, that he considered himself as their head, and took proper measures to establish his authority. A beginning once made, the rest followed in course. Every additional society was an accession to his influence. An increase of the societies demanded an addition of preachers; and new preachers producing a

proportionate increase of people, he went on in a progression, which, within the few last years of his life, was considerably superior to any of the former.

Some notice has been already taken of Mr Wesley's notion of methodism, which, with an unusual warmth of colouring, he somewhere describes, as "the only religion worthy of God." We shall select, in addition to what has been advanced, one or two more passages from his writings, not in order to prove, that he was superior to the desire of presiding at the head of a party; but to shew, that, if any dependence can be placed on the word of a man, he seriously considered the work in which he was engaged, as a religious reformation; and that his first and leading design, was to do good. In a sermon, on the difference

between the present and former times, he speaks in the following terms :

“ I cannot forbear mentioning one instance more of the goodness of God to us in the present age. He has lifted up his standard, in our island, against luxury, prophaneness, and vice of every kind. He caused, near fifty years ago, as it were, a grain of mustard-seed, to be sown near London, and it has grown and put forth great branches, reaching from sea to sea. Two or three people met together, in order to help each other to be real christians. They increased to hundreds, to thousands, to myriads; still pursuing their one point, real religion, the love of God and man ruling all their tempers, and words and actions. Now I will be bold to say, such an event as this, considering it in all its circumstances, has not been seen upon earth before,

since the time that St. John went to Abraham's bosom. No former time, since the apostles left the earth, has been comparable to it, in several respects."

Here is the true origin of Mr Wesley's zeal; and here we may perceive the source of his astonishing labours. Conceiving nothing so excellent and useful as the system he adopted, he pursued it with an ardour, of which scarcely any, but himself, had been capable; and possessing a singular talent, of inspiring others with the same views, and communicating to them a portion of the spirit by which he was animated, their influence on the minds of their hearers was inconceivable. The churches being shut against him; and being determined at all events not to relinquish the clerical office, by ceasing to preach, he chose to appear in houses and in the fields,

rather than to be silent ; and few clergymen being willing to imitate this irregularity, or to incur the reproach of itinerancy, he accepted the assistance of laymen ; and, in a way, as unexpected as it was uncommon, and as offensive to the regular dissenters as to the church, constantly enlarged his sphere, and prosecuted to the utmost, a plan, which he could scarcely have formed before hand ; and, which unfolding itself as he advanced, was gradually presented to his mind, and finally distributed into a regular system. The churches, as he informs us, were so crowded, wherever he went, that “ many of the parishioners could not get in. They then preached at Moorfields, Kennington Common, and other places. No clergyman dared to assist them. Preachers, not ordained, offered themselves, some learned, some unlearned, most of

them young ; some weak, others of remarkably strong understanding. It may be observed, these clergymen, all this time, had no plan at all, but to do good."

In the zeal of Mr Wesley, and his friends, we discover, not only the origin of methodism, but a principal cause of it's success. Perfectly in earnest in his religion, and desirous above all things to be useful to mankind, the congregations who attended his ministry were easily persuaded of his sincerity. His strict and rigid singularity, his temperance in food and sleep, his long and constant journeys, his more than herculean labours, and that utter contempt of wealth, which was conspicuous during most of his life, were justly considered by those who knew him, as well as by thousands, not personally acquainted with him, as the

unequivocal effect of the most powerful influence of religious principle. With this persuasion in the minds of the people, we need not wonder at his success. He was considered as a phœnomenon in the religious world. Wherever he went, he was received as an apostle. His congregations in general were the most numerous that attended the ministry of any individual, Mr Whitefield only excepted. His company was eagerly sought, by people of all ranks. His influence in the narrower circles of social life, was perhaps not much inferior, in it's effect on the success of his labours, to his public ministrations ; though, in this last view, his friends were fond of comparing him to the apostle of the gentiles.

Other reasons, for the almost unexampled influence of this remarkable man, may be found in the internal œconomy

and regulations of the societies. This however shall be more particularly considered under the head of discipline. But in a life of Mr Wesley, it would not become us to omit a reason, on which he laid the greatest stress. Much assistance he undoubtedly supposed himself to derive from the prudential regulations he had established : but in his estimation, the chief cause of the increasing influence of his labours and doctrines was to be ascribed to the divine agency.

Having, in justice to the memory of Mr Wesley, and from the clearest conviction in ourselves, endeavoured to shew that the leading principle by which he was influenced, was the public good, we must also remark, that, in the opinion of many, and those too of ability and discernment, his next principle was the love of sway. Perhaps he did not perceive

this so plainly, as it was perceived by others. But one of the original methodists at Oxford, and next to himself, the most celebrated among them, often used to say, that his brother Wesley was “naturally and habitually a tutor, and would be so to the end of the chapter.” This was his great foible ; nor is it difficult, even in a character, so generally disinterested, to account for. Having been the chief instrument in the establishment of methodism, it is not much to be wondered, if he considered his authority as of divine origin : nor is it at all more surprising, that he should deem the absolute exercise of that authority indispensibly necessary to the success of what he always regarded as the “work of God.” Under his auspices, every thing had succeeded even beyond his expectation ;

but he inferred too much from this, when he concluded, that the more unlimited his authority, the greater would be his usefulness among mankind.

C H A P. III.

OF THE PRINCIPLES OF METHODISM:

WE cannot enter on this subject, without pointing out a difficulty. Some will expect from us a distinct enumeration of the whole system of doctrine, comprehended in the principles of methodism: but this expectation it is impossible, at least it were improper, to gratify. The detail would considerably exceed our limits; and, in all probability, would be as tedious to some of our readers, as it might be grateful to others. As it is obvious too, that several branches of doctrine, are such as Mr Wesley held in common with christians of all de-

nominations, we think it will be proper to observe a different method.

Of those principles, in which he agrees with the articles of the church of England, such as the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, and several others, it were superfluous to take notice. It will be more consonant to the intention of these memoirs, to take a view of those, in which he has been deemed peculiar. As these have sometimes given occasion to controversy, and made no little noise in the religious world, it will be necessary to pay them a particular attention. This we shall endeavour to do with candour, but, at the same time, with freedom : though to examine the principles of communities, as well as of individuals, is an ungrateful and invidious task. But he who expects to please all, will please none : and what is infinitely worse, will

be in no small danger of violating his judgment, and sacrificing his integrity to the of love applause, or to the dread of censure.

It is observable in Mr Wesley, that, as a clergyman, he took pains to have it understood, that the doctrines he taught were strictly agreeable to the thirty-nine articles. But of these, as indeed of all other authorities, every man will be disposed to judge, in conformity to his own system. Mr Wesley and his followers considered the articles as Arminian. Mr Whitefield, on the contrary, and his friends, had no doubt that they were Calvinistic: while others, who chuse rather to adopt the medium between the two extremes, are persuaded that they are more favourable to the Baxterian, or Miltonian system.

As Mr Wesley greatly wished his

sentiments to be considered as agreeable to the articles, it may naturally be supposed, he was still more desirous that they should appear strictly conformable to what an apostle calls “the analogy of faith.” Agreeable to this inclination, in all his controversies, his chief appeal was to the scriptures. In many of the doctrines he inculcated, he might boldly make such an appeal; as it is not to be doubted, that they were well calculated to promote the interests of christianity.

The general rule, which he prescribed for himself, and for all christians, is the same which is laid down by St. Paul; “whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” An excellent rule; but capable, like other general principles, of being wrested and misunderstood. The multitude will not be too strict in the explanation of such a

precept. This Mr Wesley well knew, and he took care not to descend to the common interpretations, nor to be too lax in his application of the text. Many have supposed, and with some shew of reason, that he was inclined to carry matters too far, and to strain religious systems to an extent, as foreign to the condition, as it was beyond the powers of human nature.

Among other authorities for this supposition, are the resolutions into which he entered in the beginning of his religious course; which were “to use absolute openness and unreserve, with all he should converse with; to labour after continual seriousness, not willingly indulging himself in any, the least levity of behaviour, or in laughter, no, not for a moment; to speak no word, which does not tend to the glory of God; in parti-

cular, not a tittle of worldly things ; and to take no pleasurè, which does not tend to the glory of God.”

One of these rules we should think imprudent, and others impracticable.—“ Absolute openness and unreserve” might often not only bring a man into disagreeable and even dangerous situations, but be the means of creating insuperable prejudice ; and, as it is a case in point, we shall take the liberty to relate a story of a preacher in Mr Wesley’s connexion, who, in the practice of this rule, was very near exposing himself to no small danger. A general officer happening to come to the town where he was, he went to see the troops reviewed. The officer was observed to swear. The next morning early, he went to his lodgings, and knocking at the door, asked the servant if his master was up. He

was desired to call again, in two or three hours ; but he insisted on seeing the general immediately on urgent business. The footman finding him so importunate, ran up and told his master, who ordered him to be shewn into his chamber. When the servant withdrew, after a short introduction, he gave the general to understand, that he was come to reprove him for swearing so heartily the day before ; and that he meant to have done it on the field ; but was prevented by the croud. The officer thanked him with great politeness, and added, “ I am extremely happy, Sir, that you did not enter upon this business during the review ; for, if you had, I should certainly have run you through the body.” The application of this anecdote is obvious. We shall only observe, that zeal without prudence will

scarcely qualify it's possessor for the office of a reprover.

Equal objections lie against other parts of these resolutions. By what means a man, whom some philosophers have been at a loss how to define, but by calling him a risible animal, can live without laughing, may be an admirable question for the naturalists. For our part, we have never arrived at this species of perfection: nor indeed do we greatly covet it; and when we see any thing ridiculous, the case is plain: we must either laugh or split. It is equally clear, that a similar objection, that is, something very like an absolute impossibility, lies in the way of the resolution, not to speak "a tittle of worldly things:" a resolution which no man ever did or can observe. We mention these things, not from a humour of criticising, but because we have often

seen ignorant people render themselves ridiculous, by their awkward attempts to observe rules equally impracticable and absurd. What might be passable in Mr Wesley, would appear contemptible in most of his imitators : and it has been observed, that he soon found some of his rules to be over stretched, and frequently, even in the advanced stages of life, forgot the austerity of his principles, and entered with a good grace, into all the cheerfulness of innocent mirth.

Mr Wesley never attended any place of public amusement ; and though he did not declaim against them with so much severity as some of his people, it is plain, he did not regard them with a favourable eye. This indeed, is no great matter of wonder ; for whatever may be said in favour of some diversions of the age, it is certain that many of them are

infamous and brutal; and above all the rest, pugilism and cock-fighting, and the rest of that illiberal class. Of these we do not doubt to say, they are the disgrace of this country and of humanity. As Mr Wesley has explained himself on these subjects, we select the following observations, which he doubtless intended as a rule for his societies. Of quarter staff, cudgelling, bear and bull-baiting, and the like, he says, "they are foul remains of Gothic barbarity; a reproach, not only to religion, but to human nature. One would not pass so severe a censure on the sports of the field. Let those who have nothing better to do, still run foxes and hares out of breath. Nor need much be said about horse races, till some man of sense will undertake to defend them. It seems a great deal more may be said in defence of seeing a serious trage-

dy. I could not do it with a clear conscience; at least, not in an English theatre, the sink of all prophaneness and debauchery; but possibly others can. I cannot say quite so much for balls and assemblies, which, though more reputable than masquerades, must be allowed by all impartial persons, to have exactly the same tendency. Of playing cards, I say the same as of seeing plays. I could not do it with a clear conscience. But I am not obliged to pass any sentence on those who are otherwise minded. I leave them to their own master: to him let them stand or fall."

We are now to enquire into the leading doctrines, in which Mr Wesley has been deemed peculiar; and in which he differs from almost all the divines of every church. The first of these is the doctrine of the "direct witness." As some

notice has been taken of this in the former part of these memoirs ; and some arguments against it by Mrs Wesley and Mr Samuel Wesley have been recited, there is no necessity to enlarge upon it. It is sufficient to say, that the doctrine was always unpopular, and except in Mr Wesley's societies, found few patrons ; that by some it is inculcated, as the most important in the christian system ; while others are equally zealous in opposing it, as the fundamental error of methodism.

The dangerous use that has been made of this doctrine, cannot be more clearly perceived than in a remark in one of Mr Wesley's sermons, concerning the manner in which the first methodists insisted upon it. We give it in his own words. " Near fifty years ago, the preachers were not sufficiently

apprized of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand, that every one who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." In consequence of this, they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, "do you know that your sins are forgiven?" And upon their answering no, immediately replied, 'then you are a child of the devil.' This distinction, between a child and a servant of God, which we have before had occasion to mention, is arbitrary and capricious. It has, in reality, no foundation in scripture or reason: but the quotation is a proof what a miserable use has been made of the doctrine in question; and how fatal an influence it must have had on weak minds.

The chief doctrine, in which Mr Wesley seems to stand alone, and to differ from the divines of every church, is “christian perfection.” Of this he has treated at large in several parts of his writings, and in one or two distinct treatises. His meaning seems to be, that there is a state to be attained, at almost any period of life, in which we may be delivered, not only from sinful actions, but from the very nature and being of sin; or, in other words, from every irregular desire, and from all inordinate passions and affections. This he calls christian perfection: and this state he supposes may be acquired in a moment, by an act of faith.

In his manner of proving this, from scripture, there is often much darkness and ambiguity. Thus, in some places, he tell us, it is “to love the Lord our God with all our hearts;” in others, it

is to “rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks.” But in stating a doctrine, or in defining a term, in which that doctrine is contained, it certainly is not accurate, to speak in the words of scripture, but in the language usual among men. For scripture is liable to such a variety of interpretation; and much of it’s phraseology is so peculiarly comprehensive, that the terms borrowed from it, to explain a doctrine, will, in many instances, as much demand explanation as the doctrine itself.

It is no small objection to this scheme, that it seems to be taken, not from the divine authority, but from the mere report of individuals: and it is well remembered, that, at a conference in London, one of the preachers offering some arguments against it, Mr Wesley imme-

diately rose up ; answered his arguments by reciting the experience of some good old woman ; and, without waiting for a reply, dissolved the assembly.

As for St. Paul, who is often cited as the patron of perfection, it does not follow, because he uses the word, that he must necessarily use it in Mr Wesley's sense ; or that he teaches the doctrine on similar principles. It is obvious that he uses the word in different senses ; that he generally intends by it, the state of christians of some standing in the profession and practice of christianity, in opposition to the ignorance and weakness of new converts ; and that, in some places is meant neither more nor less than the state of glory after the resurrection. But there is no reason, from the writings of this apostle, or from any other scripture, to conclude, that there is a state

of perfection, to which, as to a certain stage, the primitive christians did, and those of every age still may instantaneously arrive.

There is another terrible objection to this doctrine. It is a new thing “under the sun;” and of mere human invention. It was no part of the profession of the primitive christians. Among their people, they knew of but three classes, the catechumens, the penitents, and the faithful. They made no distinction of *common* and *perfect* believers. They never exalted one class of christians into a state of superiority above the rest : nor did they afford them any pretence to think highly of themselves ; to despise their brethren, or to say to another, “stand by ; come not near me ; for I am holier than thou !”

It is also somewhat remarkable, that

Mr Wesley, who had long patronised the doctrine; who had shewn, on every occasion the most decided partiality to those who professed it; and who, for many years, seldom preached a sermon, without largely insisting upon it, could never be persuaded, to profess it himself. It is proper to add, that many of the preachers and people believe not a syllable of this doctrine.

Mr Wesley, in enquiring “whether God works this change instantaneously or not,” acknowledges, “the scriptures are silent upon it; the point not being determined, at least, not in express terms, in any part of the oracles of God.” If there were any truth in this doctrine, it is easy to infer, that the scriptures would not have been silent upon it. And if God does work thus instantaneously, where is the utility of pain and sickness,

and other afflictive dispensations? On this hypothesis, they are superfluous; and the “perfect work,” of which St. James speaks, is accomplished, not by the instrumentality of outward means, but by a sudden exertion of Omnipotence.

The inconsistency of the advocates for this system, is worthy of observation. For their first authority, they go back to the Old Testament, and thence derive the original promise of sanctification. But it unfortunately happens, this promise was made to the Jews in captivity, and was literally accomplished in the final reformation from the impurities of idolatry. When it is retorted from the same authority; “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not;” the answer then is, “this might hold under the law; but the law made

nothing perfect." So that the same authority, which is urged as incontestible, when it appears to favour them, is without ceremony rejected, when it makes against them!

A similar specimen of Mr Wesley's mode of reasoning on this subject, occurs in the fourth Journal. By a dexterous use of his logical ingenuity, he silenced many an opponent, whom he could not convince. His grand argument is couched in the following queries, which he seemed to consider as unanswerable: "Was there inward corruption in our Lord? Or, cannot the servant be as his master?" But this knot is easily untied, by simply answering the questions: there was no "inward corruption" in our Lord; there are also many instances in which the servant cannot be "as his master;" and this among

the rest : for it was never said of any, except himself, that he “knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

The doctrine of perfection was one subject of difference between Mr Wesley and the moravians. His old friend Böhler in particular, endeavoured to reason him out of it ; and this he did in a way, which though somewhat homely, was not destitute of ingenuity. “There is no such state, said Peter, as *sinless perfection*. Sin will, and always must remain in the soul. The *old man* will remain till death. The *old nature* is like an old tooth ; you may break off one bit, and another, and another ; but you can never get it all away ; the stump of it will stay as long as you live ; and sometimes it will ache too.”

Mr Charles Wesley was no great favourite of this principle. He thought they carried it to an undue extreme,

And if we may judge of the tree by it's fruits, such a mode of decision will scarcely incline in its favour a dispassionate enquirer. The advocates of perfection are not the most amiable people in Mr Wesley's societies. They have been the parents of much confusion and discord; and have been particularly distinguished by the bad use they made of their influence, filling him with prejudices against those infidels, who could not allow them to be as perfect as they pretended.

Being aware of objections from this quarter, Mr Wesley had recourse once more to his logical skill, by adopting a distinction, similar to that of the catholics, of sins mortal and venial. He distinguishes between wilful transgression, and sins of infirmity : and had he stopt there, we should have taken no notice of this distinction. But when he supposed

his friends to be subject to these sins of infirmity, and at the same time judged them to be perfect, he certainly supposed a contradiction in terms.

But it is time to dismiss this subject; which it appeared necessary to take notice of, since it was so favourite a doctrine with Mr Wesley; and which there is an additional reason for considering, not merely, as we suppose the professors of perfection to have deceived themselves in that profession; but as it is conceived to have a more direct tendency toward spiritual pride, and pharisaic haughtiness and bigotry, than any other system.

Of other doctrines taught by Mr Wesley, and inculcated in what are usually called, evangelical views of religion, such as the well known distinction, of works as conditions of salvation, and works as strictly and properly meritorious, much

has been said, on the supposition, that such sentiments were unfavourable to morality. This tendency we are not able to perceive. If a man cannot be saved, without a conscientious observance of the law of God, and the practice of such good works as he has ability and opportunity to perform, there is exactly the same obligation to obedience, as if that obedience were, in the strictest sense of the word, meritorious. It may be observed too, that whatever tendency, any doctrine Mr Wesley inculcated, may be supposed to have, he had no idea of it, as inferring any relaxation in morals, or as conferring any dispensation from the observance, either of social duty, or religious obligation. But as these doctrines are in no respect peculiar to Mr Wesley, but inculcated in the articles and homilies of the church of England,

and insisted upon by many, perhaps by most of the religious communities in Europe, nothing more need be added, except this one observation :—These doctrines, like all others, often cut a miserable figure, from the injudicious and absurd garb, which bunglers put upon them : for, as even a bad opinion may appear amiable, from a skilful representation ; so the best may be rendered hideous, by extravagance and excess.

Were we asked, in what instances Mr Wesley erred, in matters of doctrine, we should say, that he chiefly did so, by making religion too sensible and too circumstantial. There is, so to speak, a want of elegance and simplicity in his system. He was too fond of dividing and subdividing religion into certain stages, as objects of instantaneous attainment : and his distinctions of a child and a ser-

vant of God ; of faith, the assurance of
 faith, and the full assurance of faith ; of
 the witness and the abiding witness, and
 finally, of a perfection, instantaneous, and
 yet amissible, reduces his system to a kind
 of manual exercise, and throws over it a
 confusion and obscurity, which, to most
 understandings, must render it perfectly
 unintelligible.

C H A P. IV.

OF THE METHODISTIC DISCIPLINE.

THE discipline introduced by Mr Wesley, like all other institutions, has had the common fate, of much praise and much censure. Many, from the strictness it enforces, and the restraints it lays upon it's votaries, have compared it to the monastic and other institutions of popery: and some, from a refined policy, which they pretend to have discovered, have placed it on a similar footing with that of the Society of Jesus. But we cannot entirely agree with these reasoners. The discipline of Mr Wesley is certainly, in some respects, rigid; much more so than that of the protestant churches in ge-

neral ; and so far may bear a comparison with some instances of Romish austerity ; though the pattern he had in his eye, was to be found, not in this, but in the moravian church. But the comparison, in the other instance, is far from just. Ignatius de Loyola, when he founded his order, or at least his successors, made their primary object, the interest and aggrandizement of the church of Rome, and took it for granted, they might use guile and stratagem, or any other method, for “ the glory of God,” or what, in their estimation, was the same thing, the good of the church. Mr Wesley set out with purer motives, as is demonstrable from his letters to his most intimate friends ; and was far from attempting to establish his influence on the ruins of morality. If he did sometimes err in this instance, it was not from prin-

ciple, but from surprise or oversight; and now and then, from some supposed necessity, or from the sollicitations of selfish and designing men. The principal circumstance in which we judge him to have deviated from the direct path, is, in some instances, well known to his friends, when there was an inconsistency between his conduct and his professions; particularly, in the attachment he professed for the church, and his irregularity, especially of late, in superseding her regulations.

It must be recollected, that, when Mr Wesley set out upon his plan, it was under a firm persuasion, of an express call from God. Himself and his preachers he regarded as “extraordinary messengers,” who, in a way peculiar, and contrary to the usual forms, were appointed (to adopt his own words) “to reform

the nation, particularly the church ; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land." Conceiving this to have been his intention, and giving him credit for his professions on this subject, there is certainly a good deal of ingenuity and originality in the system he adopted.

The first thing that strikes an attentive observer, in his general discipline, is a total contrariety to all the sects and parties that have arisen, wherever there have been national establishments. However these sects have differed from each other, there was one general principle, in which they never failed to agree, a cordial aversion to the established church. This was as zealously inculcated, and by frequently dwelling upon the grounds of dissent, as assiduously kept up, as if the salvation of mankind depended upon it. The consequence was inevitable.

The rent became wider. Each was armed with additional prejudice against the other. Sectaries and establishments resembled the Jews and the Samaritans. The mount Gerazim of the one, and the Jerusalem of the other, relounded with their mutual fulminations ; and every avenue, toward a reconciliation, was guarded by the phrenzy of the bigots, as with a sword of flame.

Mr Wesley, as we may judge, as well from his general plan, as from some expressions in his writings, was very sensible of this : and as he had no objection to the articles or the liturgy, nor any of those scruples which are urged by the non-conformists, but, on the contrary, a strong bias, from education and habit, in favour of the church, he had no idea of setting out on the common principles of dissent. Speaking of other sectaries,

he observes, they laid the foundation of their system “in condemning others; we in judging and condemning ourselves.” His plan therefore was formed on different principles. He wished to be generally useful: and, with this view, though he did not desert the church, at least not formally, he expressed great moderation with regard to other denominations, and inculcated it as a principle, that none should consider their union with him as a renunciation of their original profession, but continue to observe the ordinances of their respective communities.

A principle so novel and peculiar, made no small impression on the minds of men. It had at least an air of liberality. It flattered their habits and prejudices; and it fully answered his expectation. People of all parties and persuasions became profelytes to his opini-

ons ; and still retaining some tincture of their former profession, united under his standard. It is remarkable however, that, in consequence of this union, and a free intercourse with each other, the features of their different professions grew less and less distinct, and their former prejudices subsiding by degrees, were retouched and modified into a firm attachment to the methodistic system. On their first mingling with his societies, they felt not the shock of a rupture with their own party, since such a rupture was not necessary to an union with him : and time and habit would sufficiently rivet them to their new brethren.

In conformity to this general plan, Mr Wesley took care to adjust the particulars of his ceremonial. That he might not interfere either with the church or the dissenters, he appointed for his pub-

lic worship, not the usual hours of the forenoon and the afternoon; but early in the morning, and from five or six to seven in the evening. This gave his people an opportunity, in the course of the day, to attend any minister they chose to hear: and it answered another purpose. It brought multitudes to his houses in the evening of the Sabbath-day, when few others officiated; and on the other evenings of the week, when he was still less liable to be interfered with by the dissenters or the clergy.

A distinguishing feature in this œconomy is itinerancy. Something of this, though in a less degree, may be observed in the moravians, whose ministers are appointed to their respective districts by their rulers, and when they think proper, superseded by others. But in Mr Wesley's system, it is itinerancy in the

proper sense of the word ; the preachers being annually appointed, and revolving round a certain sphere, in constant rotation ; though their revolutions are less rapid than formerly. Every part of Britain and America is divided into regular portions, called circuits ; and each circuit, containing twenty or thirty places, is supplied by a certain number of travelling preachers, from two to three or four, who go round it in a month or six weeks, seldom passing more than one or two days in a place, except the principal town in their district, where they generally spend from eight to fourteen or fifteen days.

The itinerant plan certainly argues, in it's projector, a considerable knowledge of human nature. By securing a monthly succession of preachers, during their appointment to a circuit, and then

an annual, or at most a biennial change, he made a provision for that love of variety, so natural to mankind; and by perpetually keeping up a kind of novelty, and consequently, of curiosity and expectation in the people, he did every thing that human policy could have devised, under circumstances of such irregularity, for preserving and increasing his congregations. There are not many ministers, of any denomination, perhaps there is not one, whatever his eloquence and ability, who possesses the faculty of always appearing new. Every man has his peculiar manner, an address and a strain of thinking and speaking which is his own; and when long habit has made his style and sentiments familiar to a people, he will lose much of that power of pleasing, which, in the minds of the multitude, is attached rather to sound, or

some other external charm, than to good sense, and just elocution.

This peculiarity is the chief support; the ground and pillar of methodism. So long as itinerancy can be preserved, and a frequent change of preachers kept up, so long will methodism prosper: but, should any unexpected shock loosen the foundations of this system; should it happen, in any future struggles for distinction and pre-eminence, that the body should be divided into parties, and itinerancy be superseded, from that moment methodism is no more. Mr Wesley perceived this; and as by the authority lodged in his hands, by his constant designation of the preachers to their respective circuits, and his own practice of visiting every part of the nation, he was the life and soul of itinerancy, he took every method of preserving it inviolate.

Many years ago, a prelate of high distinction on the bench, made a proposal to Mr Wesley, to provide for him, and to ordain such preachers as he should recommend, on condition, that he would relinquish itinerancy, and give up his societies. But whatever his views might be, it was little likely he should accede to such a proposal. Had his chief object been power and reputation, he would scarcely be induced to subject himself to the authority of a diocesan; and if he had nothing in view, but the public good, he would never consent to a surrender of his authority, lest the itinerant plan should be abolished. It is obvious too, that it was not in his power to have fulfilled the terms of this proposal, had he been so inclined. He might indeed have relinquished the societies, and have accepted his Lordship's offer of preferment:

but had he done so, they would certainly have prosecuted the same plan, under another leader or leaders ; for so strongly were they attached to the œconomy he had established, that a dissolution of the connexion, was at that time, impracticable.

A circumstance, in the Wesleian œconomy, as remarkable as any, is the admission of lay-preachers. Of this some notice has been taken in a former volume : and though averse to all encroachments on the liberties of mankind, whether ecclesiastical or civil, we must repeat our idea, that public examination, and an authorised and solemn form of ordination to the sacred office, is essential to the preservation of decency and good order. What mode of ordination is the best and most agreeable to the canon of scripture and the aposto-

lic usage, may perhaps, with some shew of reason, furnish matter for controversy among the patrons of opposite systems; but whether any public mode of designation to the ministry be proper, is a question that can never be agitated among rational beings, since common sense will instantly decide upon it. To this office, none ought certainly to be admitted, but such as, upon an adequate examination, shall be found competent: and those who are qualified, ought indisputably to be set apart for it, by some suitable mode of ordination.

The admission of lay preachers, which was considered as a sort of levelling scheme, was not well received by the higher orders of society. In Mr Whitefield's connexion, this system was not so remarkable: for he was assisted by many clergymen, who had embraced his opi-

nions, and consequently had less need of laymen : and many of those, who were not episcopally ordained, contrived to procure some sort of ordination, and officiated in the clerical habit.—If they were not clergymen, they took care to borrow the garb.

Though this deviation in Mr Wesley from the clerical regularity, was not relished by the rich and the great, it was better received among the lower class. It flattered their natural fondness for equalization ; while it laid a foundation for a perpetual and inexhaustible supply of preachers, and consequently, was no small source of the rapid increase of the societies.

In Mr Wesley's plan, almost every thing that could be thought of, as having a tendency to create influence, and conciliate esteem, was sanctioned by a stand-

ing rule. Visiting from house to house; a punctual attention to the sick and afflicted; frequent collections for the poor, and the strict morality which is inculcated in the regulations he established, have an air of much piety and humanity, and doubtless had no small influence on the success of his undertakings.

In this system, the order is as follows: the preachers, the stewards, the leaders, the people. The office of a preacher, is to preach twice a day, to visit the sick, to meet the stewards and leaders once a week, and to preside in the various meetings wherever he shall happen to be present. One preacher, in every circuit, is called the assistant. It is his business to superintend the conduct of the other preachers, and of the societies at large; to appoint all the occasional assemblies, such as watch-nights, and quarterly meet-

ings; to make the collections at stated periods; and to give an account, at the annual conference, of the state of the societies in his circuit.

The office of a steward, is to receive the collections, and to superintend the temporal œconomy of the societies. That of a leader is to meet once a week a certain number of people, who are called his class; to receive their contributions, which he gives in to the steward, to superintend their conduct, and to assist the preachers in visiting the sick.

It is expected of the people, that they strictly observe the rules of the society, by punctually attending the meetings, public and private; by keeping up public worship in their families; by abstaining from all games, such as cards and dice, and whatever is usually classed under the head of amusement; and above

all, by avoiding every species of immorality.

The meetings among the methodists, especially in large towns, are almost without number. Every society is divided into companies of ten or fifteen, called classes; each of which regularly meets the leader once a week. Many of these are subdivided into smaller companies, called bands, which also meet once a week; and these are again collected into a general company, called the body bands, and another called the select band; each of which is met by the preacher once a week. It is needless to add, that these meetings are purely religious. The select bands are made up chiefly of those who profess perfection, and, as the name signifies, are, for some real or supposed distinction in piety, selected from the rest. These were the peculiar favourites

of Mr Wesley ; and, at one time, that is, during the rage of prophecy, in 1763, amounted, in London alone, to about six hundred. If, to the meetings already enumerated, we add from thirteen to fourteen sermons preached in the course of the week, which is the case in many places in the kingdom, and the love-feasts, the watch-nights, and occasional meetings for prayer, as on Wednesdays and Fridays, the number will be astonishing ! Indeed, we do not scruple to say, they are much too frequent ; and that a relaxation, in this instance, especially among the large societies, would be a general good, not only to the preachers, who, in more senses than one, are exhausted and worn out by this excessive labour, but also to the people, who are too frequently called away from their families, and their temporal concerns.

Much fault has been found with the mode of conducting many of these meetings. To the classes and bands, it has been particularly objected, that they turn too much on personal examination and enquiry into the states of individuals; and have a tendency to produce, in the ignorant or hypocritical, false and absurd pretensions to superior sanctity. In this instance, we are of opinion, an alteration might easily be made for the better; and that, if advice and exhortation, or even a free conversation on some scriptural subject, were substituted, it would be more conducive to the interests of religion.

In the beginning of methodism, and always till the execution of the deed in 1784, every preacher was considered, when admitted to travel, as a member of conference; which was held, in the months of July or August, at Lon-

don, Bristol, Leeds, or Manchester.

In this meeting Mr Wesley presided. Here young preachers, offered upon trial, were admitted or rejected. The character of every itinerant underwent a scrutiny, and, in case of immorality, or any sufficient cause, the punishment was suspension or dismissal. Each preacher, on admission, paid one guinea, and half a guinea annually, as a fund for the support of superannuated preachers, and their widows. Collections were here received from all quarters, for the support of the work; and the preachers were appointed to their districts for the ensuing year.

It may naturally be supposed, that, among two or three hundred persons, there would sometimes happen a clashing of interests; and that several, being anxious for an appointment to the same,

circuit, some unpleasant altercations would arise. But this was much less frequent than might have been expected. Mr Wesley generally marked their respective circuits in his own plan, and regulated almost every thing of importance, previous to the meeting of conference; so that, within the last fifteen or twenty years, this meeting was in fact rather for the declaration or ratification of his decisions, than for any purposes of deliberation and counsel: and such was the ascendancy he had acquired, and such their esteem and veneration for this extraordinary man, that though the whigs now and then complained, and felt a little sore, on being treated like a French parliament, as he sometimes called them, in general, they did not fail to acquiesce. There were, however, some instances to the contrary. Some not only remonstra-

ted against any thing they disapproved, but even challenged him to dispute the point ; an invitation, which, it is needless to add, was not often accepted. But rebellion was seldom successful, and the malcontents were commonly under the necessity of submitting, or of leaving the connexion.

At the meetings of conference, Mr Wesley usually preached both night and morning. On these occasions he took care to exemplify in his own practice, and in a manner peculiar to himself, to enforce early rising, with similar regulations. And every one knows, that he had a superior talent, for making trifles appear important, and for turning indifferent things, when he disapproved them, into ridicule and contempt. The most judicious of his preachers and people always thought he went too far in trifles and non-

essentials ; but they all admired the address with which he recommended them.

By some of his followers, his conduct and opinions were observed, as an infallible rule of judgment and practice. Some of his preachers carried their admiration so far as to quote his writings in public, as others quote the scriptures, and to imitate him in almost every thing. If he left off tea, which he did in 1742, they did the same. If he lay upon the boards, or lived on vegetables, they did so too : and because he was fond of morning preaching, they observed the practice, at five in the morning, winter and summer though, very often, they could scarcely collect half a dozen hearers. Some imitated his hand writing, and so exactly copied his stile and manner of speaking, that the difference was almost imperceptible.

How he accomplished it, is not easy to say. Perhaps his extreme attention to these minutiae might be a powerful instrument in his popularity. The fact however, is certain. Scarcely any man has ever possessed in such perfection, the talent of attaching mankind to his person and opinions: and this enabled him to establish a discipline, not naturally pleasing to the human mind; and to enforce it's observance, with a punctuality that is inconceivable. We incline to think, that the opinion of his sincerity and zeal, was the chief source of this singular docility; and that really conceiving these regulations to be important, he the more easily persuaded others, that they were so.

The chief excellence of this system, is it's rigid attention to morality. This remark is indeed contrary to the general opinion: but that opinion is ill founded;

for it is founded in ignorance and prejudice. In all societies, some will be found, who are a scandal to their profession: and among the methodists, as well as others, some hypocrites will endeavour to deceive; and the secretly vicious will impose as usual, upon the unsuspecting, and for a time elude the most industrious vigilance. But no vice is allowed in this œconomy. No society, not even that of the Quakers, is so rigid in this respect; and in general, whenever a member is found to be immoral, he is instantly excluded.

There are however, two general defects, too obvious to be concealed: the one in the discipline itself; the other in the manner in which it is administered. In the former view, it is too intricate and complex; abounding in minutiae, and as full of manœuvre and evolution as the

German tactics. In the latter we observe some partiality ; particularly in the appointments of the itinerants. Improper persons are appointed to the office of assistants. A certain number of preachers, through an interest they have contrived to keep up with Mr Wesley, have for some years past, almost appropriated to themselves a set of circuits, which they have found to be the most eligible ; and consequently, have confined others not in any respect their inferiors, except in an undue influence, to those, which are the most uncomfortable and laborious. This is an evil, which the deed of 1784, is well calculated to increase : and it is an evil, among others, which, if not remedied, will certainly operate to the division of methodism, and finally to it's destruction.

C H A P. V.

REASONS FOR INTERFERING WITH THE CLERGY:
OF PREACHING EXTEMPORE, AND IN THE OPEN
AIR.

THE opposition Mr Wesley met with from various quarters, was, as we have seen, for the most part, violent and illiberal: in some few instances, it was more candid. Some he found, who abhorring every species of persecution, and yet not perfectly satisfied concerning his authority for going up and down, and interfering with the regular clergy of every denomination, entered into a friendly discussion, and frankly stated their objections. They thought he ought

rather to have retired to the university, as formerly, or to have remained silent, till presented to a living ; and that on “ catholic principles,” by which we suppose, was meant equitable principles, he could not justify his proceedings. The answer we subjoin in his own words.

“ If by catholic principles, you mean any other than spiritual, they weigh nothing with me. I allow no other rule, whether of faith, or practice, than the holy scriptures. But on scriptural principles, I do not think it hard, to justify whatever I do. God, in the scriptures, commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, and confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another’s parish ; that is, in effect, to do it at all ; seeing I have now no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear,

God or man? ‘ If it be just to obey man, rather than God, judge you. A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, and woe is me, if I preach not the gospel.’ But where shall I preach it, upon the principles you mention? Why, not in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America: not in any of the christian parts, at least, of the habitable earth. For all these are, after a sort, divided into parishes. If it be said, ‘ go back to the heathen, from whence you came;’ nay: but neither could I now, on your principles, preach to them. For all the heathens in Georgia, belong to the parish either of Savannah or Frederica.

“ Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far, I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to

declare unto all, that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work, which I know God has called me to. And sure I am, that his blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I therefore to be faithful, in fulfilling the work he hath given me to do. His servant I am, and as such, employed according to the plain direction of his word, as I have opportunity, ‘doing good unto all men.’ And his providence clearly concurs with his word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, and go about, doing good.”

Such being the principles, on which he founded his authority for acting as he did, we cannot much wonder at his perseverance. Considering himself obliged to preach, and not being permitted to do so in the usual form, he struck out a new

plan. Excluded from the churches, and having no particular cure of souls, he took the universe for his parish; and thus, as he conceived, “ Providence concurring with his word,” he entered, divinely conducted, on his roving commission. How far this reasoning is just, may be left to the casuists. We will not undertake to refute it. To him it was certainly satisfactory: and his conscience being interested in it, it is pretty evident, that nothing less than an exertion of the legislative authority could have put a stop to his career.

Another reason for this conduct, tho’ not mentioned here, may easily be traced, through a variety of his publications. The supineness, as he conceived, of many of the established clergy, and their want of attention to the pastoral care, was, with him, a reason of great

importance, for pursuing the course he had adopted. As it was a delicate subject, he was in general cautious how he introduced it; and unless it were extorted from him, seldom mentioned them in terms of disapprobation: but on some occasions, he has more than hinted, that many of his brethren were “blind guides,” and that the people were perishing “for lack of knowledge.”

One thing is pretty clear. Necessity alone can be a sufficient plea for irregularity. Every deviation from established customs, especially in things that are held sacred, must occasion some ferment, and produce a shock in the body politic, not to be adventured, except an obvious and pressing occasion shall demand it. If Mr Wesley's position be true, that, from the time of Charles II. a prince whom he detested above all others, every species

of wickedness was increasing, and all religion upon the decline, or rather nearly extinct, till the affair of the “young gentlemen at Oxford,” that occasion presented itself; and the general corruption demanded an extraordinary remedy. We hope, however, that the nation, at this period, was not in quite so bad a state as he supposed. Elijah imagined that he stood alone, when there were no less than seven thousand servants of the God of Israel: and when Mr Wesley, in a late discourse, drew so melancholy a picture of the state of religion in this country, previous to his commencing itinerant, it is not improbable, that his zeal might have exceeded his judgment, and that the colouring was copied, partly from nature, but perhaps, still more, from his own imagination.

But of this enough. It has been observed, that pressing occasions can alone justify deviations from the common track. The question is, whether the clergy of the present age have contributed, by their improper conduct, to furnish such an occasion. Among the methodists, it is the general opinion, that they have. Such also seems to be the judgment of many of the dissenters, and their ministers; who are generally supposed, among their own friends, to be more exemplary in their deportment. But here, two considerations should be taken into the account. The established clergy are much more numerous than any other; and the dissenting clergy are more dependent on their people: and this being considered, it may perhaps admit of a doubt, whether the latter, in proportion to their numbers, have not as many disorderly

ministers, as are to be found among the former; or at least, whether such instances would not be quite as frequent, were they as little dependent on their congregations. Some of our dissenting brethren may perhaps smile at the observation; but it is said, that, on the continent, the English clergy in general are considered as a grave and respectable body: and we are informed, that a French and an English clergyman, are as different as a harlequin and a quaker preacher.

Upon the whole, it has never been proved to our satisfaction, and we believe it is not true, that the clergy are, or have been, in any period of the present century, so generally immoral and corrupt, as is commonly supposed. We must however confess, that the instances are too frequent; and that all the clergy are not

such as their profession requires, nor competent, in ability or inclination, to the worthy discharge of their sacred office. There are undoubtedly to be found, who are of opinion, that both to do and say, is too much in all conscience ; that a clergyman is like a hand-post ; and that, if he shew the way, it is not necessary he should walk in it himself. But pure doctrine and a disorderly practice are seldom united. The discourses of a bad man, at least if they are the produce of his own labours, will scarcely be worth hearing : and he who has no concern for his own salvation, must be little qualified for the instruction of others.

It only remains to observe, under the article of irregularity, that another argument, in favour of it, has been drawn from the remote situation of many places in the country, which are at such a dis-

tance from all churches and chapels, as to render it almost impossible for the people to attend the regular clergy ; so that, in matters of religion, they were reduced to an almost total ignorance and barbarity.

One of the eccentricities of methodism, and against which the public voice is almost unanimous, is field-preaching : though Mr Wesley and others have undertaken to defend it, as no breach of any known law, human or divine ; as contrary to no principle of reason, and as infringing no man's natural rights. When first practised by Mr Whitefield and Mr Wesley, it's novelty attracted great multitudes, though it's singularity frequently excited disgust.

Could precedent confer propriety, it may be observed, that this custom had been practised long before this æra, both

in Romish and Protestant countries. Many of the catholic priests, in Ireland, observe it to this day. And there was a time, when even the dignitaries of the church of England thought it no profanation, nor any thing derogatory to their dignity, to hold forth at St. Paul's Cross, in the presence of the tumultuous rabble, of the most noisy and turbulent city in the world. Even Oxford has had it's field preachers. The author of the Ecclesiastical polity has frequently exhibited in her streets: and it is well known, that, till very lately, the precincts of St. Mary Magdalen College have annually resounded with declamations from the stone-pulpit. But these days are past. The stone-pulpit is closed; and the Baptist is defrauded of his annual tribute!

Some respect is certainly due to local custom and public opinion. Long habit:

acquires, in many instances, the sanction of a law : and, above all, decency in divine worship, is indispensable. It must be a most uncomfortable thing, and greatly distracting to a preacher and his audience, to be interrupted, in so solemn an act, by the rattling of coaches, and the oaths of the populace. Necessity seems to be the only sufficient reason for field-preaching. Where there are places of worship, they ought undoubtedly to be preferred : and as this is universally the case with the the methodists, as well as the other sects, in all probability, they will gradually forsake the fields, and quietly retire within their own houses.

Another instance of irregularity, in the history of methodism, is preaching without notes. This is a natural effect of itinerancy, and perhaps, of the defective education of many itinerants. It is not

every one that can write a sermon. What would not look so well upon paper, nor be so well attended to, if delivered with the deliberate articulation of a reader, may pass much better in another form, and with the fire and animation of an extemporary address. It may be added too, that their continual excursions from place to place, render it almost impossible they should write their discourses : and if they had such opportunities, it would be extremely inconvenient to carry them about. In a word, it seems absolutely necessary, that every itinerant shall preach extempore.

Of the propriety or impropriety of this mode, we shall say little. Some are of opinion, that were it universally adopted by the clergy of every denomination, it would greatly tend to the improvement of religious knowledge ; and that such a

practice, rendering it impossible for any man to be a stated preacher, without a considerable acquaintance with divinity, it would render that study so much the more general, as it would be indispensibly necessary to success and eminence in the ministry:

The account Mr Wesley has given of the talents of his preachers; is just, though general. Some, he observes, were “of weak, others of remarkably strong understanding.” Many of them were under great disadvantages, in point of education; and consequently, were subject to perpetual blunders: and some either had, or affected to have, the most cordial contempt for learning; and seemed to think, that religion and science were incompatible. From preachers of this class has proceeded all that ribaldry, and nonsense, and vociferation, which

they found themselves under the necessity of substituting for information and argument.

But this was not a general character. Such as had a taste for learning, were indefatigable in reading, and in seizing every method of improvement: and their attainments were, in some instances, very considerable, as well in letters and general knowledge, as in the pursuits immediately connected with the ministry. One instance Mr Wesley has given us, in the following passage, which is taken from one of his late sermons: “ I knew a man, about twenty years ago, who was so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible, that, if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old, or Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the

one or the other occurred in the Bible, but also what it meant in every place. His name was Thomas Walfh." We suppose that here Mr Wesley only meant, any remarkable word; since, without this restriction, the anecdote could not possibly be true. This gentleman, who was an excellent Hebrew scholar, and a great master of biblical knowledge, died a martyr to itinerancy, at the early period of twenty-eight. Among the methodists, he has been much commended as a preacher; but his printed sermons, of which there is a volume, are no very favourable specimen of his abilities in this department. We have heard extemporary discourses from several of Mr Wesley's preachers infinitely superior, in elegance, and every other requisite of composition, to his written sermons. Whether this mode of speaking in pub-

lic, be in general the most eligible or not, it is certainly the best adapted to the itinerant plan : and such is the opinion entertained of it's utility, that it will, without doubt, be among the last things that will be superseded.

C H A P. VI.

OF THE INFLUENCE OF METHODISM.

AMONG other subjects of enquiry concerning the progress of methodism, and not the least important, is that which regards it's influence on society: and this influence has been considerable. It has been attended, from the beginning, with a visible reformation, in all ranks of people, particularly the most rude and uncultivated. The assiduity of the labourers in this vineyard, was the chief visible cause of their success. They did not confine themselves to the public exercise of the ministry. They visited from house to house. They mixed much

with the people, and frequently entered into such conversation as was calculated to acquire their confidence, and confirm them in the doctrines they had embraced. The manners of the preachers were marked with a simplicity, highly pleasing to the people among whom they laboured : and as the latter had no doubt, that in general, they were men of sincere piety, their uncommon diligence in preaching, exhorting, and visiting the sick, had such an effect upon the public, that they have constantly been increasing, at the rate of several thousands in the year.

The influence of methodism is nowhere more visible than among the tinners in Cornwall, and the colliers in other parts of the kingdom. When in it's infancy, it was said of Mr Whitfield, " if he will convert heathens, why does he not go to the colliers at Kings-

wood?" In 1739, he did so; and the effect was visible. Till that time, scarcely any of them had ever attended a place of worship. It is no exaggeration to say, they were in every sense of the word, as fierce and uncultivated, as in a civilized country, it is possible to conceive. Broils and quarrels without end, which were decided in the pugilistic mode, with the most savage brutality; the grossest and vilest impurities; and every species of vice, which can be perpetrated by a people, as void of education and refinement, as of every good principle, had rendered Kingswood a proverb of infamy, a sink of all sorts of vulgarity and profaneness.

The only remedy that was found for these evils, was in the labours of the first methodists. The change that took place, was rapid, and extensive. The moment

they became religious, their brutality subsided. In a few years, many thousands of the colliers became well acquainted with the principles of religion ; and the consequent reformation of manners was more general, and more complete, than those who knew them before could have supposed practicable.

Kingwood, Cornwall, and the neighbourhood of Newcastle upon Tyne, in point of decency and morality among the labouring people, had been nearly upon a par : and it is remarkable, that in each of these places, methodism has been particularly successful. The reformation in these places, may serve in some sort, as a specimen of what was done in other parts of the kingdom. The exact proportion of utility, it is impossible to ascertain. It is sufficient, that the character and manners of the hearers have been considerably im-

proved, and that immense multitudes who had been remarkable for their vicious and profane conduct, became exemplary in every species of piety and virtue. It is presumed, none of the higher ranks will say, that such a change was not for the better. Though gentlemen are often above being religious themselves, they seem generally to have agreed, that it is very proper for the vulgar.

In this enquiry, impartiality demands, that we should take notice of an objection. It has been frequently urged, that, though the methodists may be reformed from the grosser vices, they are greatly prone to others, particularly to calumny. We think this is not generally true; though it is certainly more so, than the advocates for methodism will believe. There is, in the discipline itself, something that has a tendency this way. They

are instructed to watch over one another, and to reprove every thing they suppose to be sinful. The consequence of which must necessarily be, that, as weak minds will often discover an evil where it does not exist; they will censure another for a handsome coat, a ruffle, or powdered hair, as some flagrant immorality; and will be subject to a frequent breach of charity in condemning others, for things perfectly indifferent. This however, will be chiefly among the ignorant. The liberal and well informed will be superior to such absurdities; and in spite of all they have heard of the necessity of dressing like quakers, or rather in a stile far less elegant and becoming, they will perceive that religion must be of a higher nature; that it never can depend on a plain garb, or an unpowdered head; and that singular deviations from the custom

of the country in which we live, are more properly arguments of bigotry and folly, than of propriety and good sense. But the beginnings of almost all sects, have been more or less distinguished by an overstrained preciseness : and it may be expected, in due time, that an accession of knowledge, producing an increase of charity, will pare away these excrescences, and give, what is much wanted, the polish of candour and urbanity to the whole system.

One distinguished effect of methodism, is it's influence on the temporal concerns of the societies. Many of the people, on their first union with Mr Wesley, were miserably poor : and this poverty was occasioned, in innumerable instances, by idleness and drunkenness, and other vices, which must be infinitely prejudicial to the affairs of every man, but espe-

erally of those who are to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. Without relinquishing these vices, they could neither be admitted, nor continued in the societies. The consequence was highly advantageous. Multitudes, who in extravagance and dissipation, had vied, as much as possible, with their superiors, and had been accustomed to spend their wages in ale-houses and cock-pits, and to leave their families to pine in indigence at home, were instructed to make a reputable provision for their support. Habits of industry and frugality brought peace and plenty into their habitations. Instead of pawning and borrowing, as before, they were gradually enabled, not only to lend, but to give liberally to the necessities of others. This example was set them by Mr Wesley and other leading people; and they followed it with an

alacrity and perseverance worthy so excellent a pattern. We know one society alone, which collected annually, for the relief of the poor, from six to seven hundred pounds: and, were a calculation to be made of the sums given away in the same proportion, in charities of different kinds, by methodists in other parts of the kingdom, the sum would be incredible. One excellent charity, to which they may be numbered among the most liberal benefactors, is the institution of Sunday-schools. To this they have not only largely contributed, but they have done much more. They have observed a conduct, which few have imitated. They have condescended, without any reward, to become the teachers of these children, and to devote the intervals of worship to their instruction. An example, which, if generally follow-

ed, could not fail to have the happiest effects, and to extend much more widely, the benign influence of this philanthropic institution. It remains only to add, that the increase of industry and sobriety, has been attended with the best influence on their affairs : so that, notwithstanding their contributions to charities of all kinds, and their maintenance of such a number of preachers, they are visibly increasing in wealth ; and that, not by speculation and fraud, but by their attention to business, and their freedom from the dissipation and luxury, so fatally prevalent in the present age.

To the good effects of methodism, already recited, may be added another : the progress of learning. It is observed, in the lower classes, that, except in some individuals more ambitious than the rest, there is little inclination to learning ;

and some particular object presented to their view, can alone impel them to improve the mind, and to emerge from the supineness and ignorance of uncultivated nature. What no other principle could effect, is frequently accomplished by a taste for religion. It has been seen in thousands of instances: and a desire to be acquainted with the scriptures has produced a love of letters, and an improvement in general knowledge, which must be of infinite utility, and bids fair for still greater advances in science, and consequently, in every thing liberal and ornamental to human nature.

It will be remarked, by the judicious reader, that, in this view, we have chiefly confined ourselves to the influence of methodism on morals. The reason is obvious. We certainly consider it as a reformation; but we conceive it to be so,

not so much in opinion as in practice. Those doctrines of methodism, which are peculiar, are either not true, or dubious, or indifferent ; while those, which are confessedly scriptural and just, are such as they hold, not alone, but in common with christians of other denominations. In this, it will be perceived, we materially differ from Mr Wesley, who frequently, in his discourses from the pulpit, and, in a treatise written on purpose, complimented his people, on their singular purity of doctrine. It is natural to suppose, the system we have embraced, to be more excellent than the rest : but on this head, no man can be too diffident in his declarations : and the leader of a sect, which himself has founded, should especially remember, that the question of orthodoxy is an endless enquiry ; that it is still before the judges ;

and, if we may guess the future by the past, will never be actually decided, till that day, which shall "try every man's work," and determine of what "fort it is."

C H A P. VII.

CONTROVERSIES BETWEEN MR WESLEY AND
OTHERS.

THE peculiarities of Mr Wesley, soon procured him a variety of opponents. Among these was Dr George Lavington, then bishop of Exeter. His “Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared,” is a lively, satyrical performance ; in which the plan, though invidious, was well conceived ; and the subject ensured it abundance of readers. To compare methodism with popery, was the surest way to render it detestable. The book was answered by Mr Wesley ; who endeavoured to shew, that it was

more distinguished by invective, than argument. But his Lordship was on the popular side; and the work soon ran through several editions. It was some time before Mr Wesley knew who was his antagonist: and it is remarkable, that he has treated the Bishop more sarcastically, and with less ceremony, than almost any other writer, with whom he was engaged. In this debate, we can sometimes perceive a degree of indignation, which he seldom discovered, in any controversy.

The most distinguished of Mr Wesley's opponents was Dr Warburton; who, in his "Scripture Doctrine of Grace," treated him with his usual roughness. The temper of this prelate was not amiable. His controversial style might have better suited a colonel of pandours than a christian bishop: and though he exerted every effort to pour contempt upon his antagon-

ist; this performance will reflect no great honour on the cause of christianity. In the opinion of some, and it is said to have been that of the famous Churchill, he explained away in that essay, a material branch of christian doctrine. The satyrist, who hated the bishop, did not neglect the opportunity of exercising his talent. He ridiculed him upon the subject he had chosen, as having mistaken his fort, and got out of his latitude. His strictures on this subject are in every one's memory.

His Lordship was answered by Mr Whitefield and Mr Wesley; but by none with such strength of argument, as by the Reverend Mr Andrews, a clergyman in the neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells. Besides these, Mr Wesley drew his quill against Dr Free, Dr Middleton, Dr Taylor of Norwich, and several o-

thers : but the most virulent debate in which he ever engaged, was that which respected the Calvinian system.

The differences between him and Mr Whitefield have been already noticed. Though Antipodes in sentiment, they kept up at least a decent civility. But after this gentleman's decease, several of his followers, forgetting the moderation of which he set them an example, soon shewed by what spirit they were influenced, and flamed out at once, in all the rage and intolerance of their system.

The first controversy on the subject was with the celebrated Mr Hervey ; a gentleman of much piety and learning, and of the mildest and most amiable manners. Mr Wesley had drawn up some objections against this gentleman's Dialogues of Theron and Aspasio : and the latter not satisfied with these

objections, which indeed did appear in a "questionable shape," prepared an answer in eleven letters. This answer was not published in Mr Hervey's life. It is said, he gave orders, on his death-bed, that it should be suppressed: and execrable was the zeal, which broke through so solemn an injunction.

In this work are evident marks of interpolation. The style is sometimes very different from that of his other writings. But, above all, there is a bitterness and malignancy, which certainly was not the spirit of the gentle Hervey. The letters were republished in Edinburgh by Mr Erskine, and the prejudice they excited, was one cause of the little success of methodism in Scotland.

The acrimony of this publication was but a prologue to the play. In the year 1770, Mr Wesley, having printed some

observations in the the minutes of conference, on the doctrine of merit ; and, above all, having consulted his preachers on the means of stopping “ the plague,” as he bluntly termed predestination ; a circular letter was sent by the late Mr Shirley, to the principal clergy of the Calvinistic persuasion, inviting them to attend the next conference, and insist on a formal recantation of this heresy. Mr Wesley’s concessions not being deemed satisfactory, they entered their protest, and began a most furious paper war, which was conducted by the late Mr Toplady, the two Mr Hills, and the Vicar of Everton.

The most humorous pamphlet, on this occasion, was the ‘ Christian World unmasked,’ of this last gentleman. It abounds with waggery ; and among many shrewd observations, often couched

in satirical, and sometimes in elegant language, there is a sufficient proportion of insinuations against "the old fox."

But this dispute was more remarkable for it's wit, than it's urbanity. Mr Toplady was indisputably a man of learning and abilities : but his talents wanted the charm of modesty and candour. He published several pieces on the subject in debate, and, among the rest, a translation of Zanchius, an Essay on Fate and Necessity, and a work, which he considered as unanswerable, entitled, "An historic View of the doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England." It consists chiefly of extracts from various authors, many of whom were clergymen and bishops, and some of them martyrs in the Marian persecution. All these he supposes to be orthodox, or, in other words, Calvinistic. But in this, and other tracts

of the party, we cannot but remark a circumstance, too striking to be overlooked. Wherever the writer finds a passage, in which the words “elect, election,” and others of similar import occur, he prints them in capitals or italics, and takes it for granted, they must mean unconditional election; which is the point to be proved: so that, very often, when he thinks he has accomplished the business, and presented you with an irrefragable argument, it turns out, upon examination, to be, not an argument, but a *petitio principii*.

It were greatly to be wished, there had been no other defect in this writer. But there was one, for which there can be no excuse. He did not always recollect, that a clergyman ought to speak and write like a gentleman, and a christian. He betrayed a confidence in himself, not

to be equalled, but by his contempt of his antagonists : and his treatment of Mr Wesley was scurrilous to the last degree. To an ingenuous mind, nothing can be more ungrateful, than a review of this illiberal dispute : and though, from this assemblage, we did intend to have culled some flowers for the reader's inspection ; on second thoughts, we think it better to leave them to their merited oblivion. There is a mode of controversy, in which "the conqueror is more infamous than the conquered *."

The most prolific, and by far the most polite writer on this occasion, was the late Mr Fletcher ; a Swiss by birth, but a clergyman of the church of England, and vicar of Salop. The temper of this gentleman did not incline him to polem-

* Monthly Review for 1789, page 338.

ic divinity. He was devout and pious to a degree seldom equalled since the first ages of christianity. But, when urged into the controversy, by his love of truth, and his veneration for Mr Wesley, he shewed himself a complete master of his weapons : and, in his hands, the ablest of his antagonists were like Lichas in the hands of Hercules. They sunk into nothing in presence of a man, who equally excelled in temper and in skill. He was charged by these gentlemen with illiberal sarcasm, and an uncandid representation of their principles. But the charge was ill-founded. Mr Fletcher did not represent predestination in the most amiable point of view ; but he depicted her as she is. He disrobed her of the meretricious ornaments her votaries had put upon her. He threw aside the veil with which she was covered ; and, exposing

her to public view, exhibited, not only the comforts of election, but those also of preterition ; and displayed the decree of reprobation stamp'd in indelible characters upon her forehead.

His success was such as might be expected. He convinced all but those who would not be convinced. His arguments were unanswerable : and he retired from the field, covered with well-earned glory, and crowned with victory. It was fortunate for Mr Wesley, who wrote a pamphlet or two on the occasion, that the conduct of this war was taken off his hands ; and that, aided by such a coadjutor, he might stand aloof, a spectator of the combat, without engaging in it otherwise than he pleased ; and he soon retired from the field, happy “ in being succeeded by so able an auxiliary *.”—

* Monthly Reviewers.

This gentleman's works, which make about eight volumes in octavo, deserve the attention of every clergyman, not only as admirable models of controverfy, but as containing many curious and useful observations, on almost every branch of divinity. Mr Fletcher died in 1785: and it is hoped this controverfy is closed for ever.

Mr Wesley did not confine himself to religious discussion. In the beginning of the war in America, his character imbibed a strong tincture of politics: and two sermons*, he preached at this juncture, in the Foundery and West-street Chapel, from the views they contained of the conduct of government, and the antiministerial spirit which they breathed, were very remarkable. A gentleman happening to ask what he then thought

* From 2. Samuel, xv. 31. and Jeremiah xl. 6, 7.

of the public measures, was answered, "what should I think? Oppression will make a wise man mad." This is sufficient to shew, that, at that period, he was decidedly averse to the war.

Presently after, he changed his sentiments. His conversion was instantaneous. And what is most remarkable, in the history of this event, is that, sudden as it was, it was absolute and complete. Converted himself, his next care, was to convert his brethren : and, in this office, his zeal was indefatigable. He not only carried his sentiments into all companies, and made them the subject of almost every conversation, but he eagerly displayed them in public ; and the pulpit finished what the table began. Some were pleased, and others disgusted. For a time such disquisitions, being novel, might have their charms ; but the delirium last,

ed not long. When the first paroxysm had a little subsided, the people awoke, as from a dream. They began to perceive, that their meeting-houses had been converted into theatres of political disquisition, and were ashamed and astonished to reflect, that frequently, instead of worshipping God, or attending to a religious discourse, they had been listening to an old tale, a thousand times repeated, of the king and the Americans. But in those days, politics were all the rage: and even the pulpit was not sacred from "the dissensions and animosities of mankind."

In this debate, Mr Wesley published a tract, under the title of "A calm Address to the American Colonies." It had an astonishing run. But as it was taken, with little alteration, and without any acknowledgment, from a pamphlet of Dr

Johnson, it brought a flood of obloquy upon him, and presented his enemies an occasion, they were not negligent to improve. By his old friend, Toplady, he was once more “tarred and feathered;” while a new antagonist, by proving he had read a book, which he denied ever to have seen, endeavoured publicly to convict him of a deliberate falsehood. The truth was, he had seen the book; but had totally forgot it: and perhaps most of us have been more than once in the same predicament. But where was the charity of this intention? or what advantage could it have been to the advocates for liberty, had he succeeded in proving his point?

We defend not Mr Wesley’s conduct in these transactions: and it is impossible to defend it. It was imprudent in the highest degree. We mean not how-

ever to condemn him for having changed his sentiments. He had a right to change them, if he saw reason to do so: but we censure his want of liberality. We condemn him for not allowing others the liberty he took himself; for thinking that every one ought to believe as he did; and for censuring those who could not embrace his political opinions, as enemies of their king and country. How often this language was held, during the American war, is in the memory of thousands. But the doctrine was false, as it was illiberal. Many, at least, of the opposers of that war, were the friends of liberty. They were the friends of the nation; and their principles, however unfashionable, were the principles of the constitution.

Much as we disapprove Mr Wesley's warmth on this occasion, we must do ju-

fice to his integrity. The idea, that he was bribed by ministry, was without foundation. He neither received, nor meant to receive any thing: and we have heard, from good authority, that a living, which was offered, first to him, and afterwards to Mr Fletcher, was rejected by both.

In this dispute, several pieces were published by Mr Wesley and this gentleman. The latter was the author of "Letters to Caleb Evans;" and the former, in an "Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland," and "Observations on civil Liberty," in answer to Dr Price, zealously laboured to inculcate his opinions. In all his publications on these subjects, it will easily be perceived, that his principles are highly monarchical. They were strictly conformable to those in which he was educated; and he was pretty gener-

ally successful in disseminating them among his people.

His last paper war, of any consequence, was with Mr O'Leary, on the principles of the church of Rome, and the policy of the popery bill. It was no wonder, that a zealous protestant should dislike this bill, or that a catholic, equally zealous, should consider it with rapture, and eagerly vindicate the good old cause. Into the merits of that cause, we shall not lose much time by enquiring. Perhaps the bill was a good one. These are not the days of intolerance: and though we care not how little power is lodged in the hands of the catholics, we cordially wish them the most extensive toleration.

The part Mr O'Leary took in this controversy has been extolled to the skies. His liberality, and his argumentation

have been praised as something more than human : and liberality is certainly commendable. But when were catholics in power, the patrons of toleration ? What would the old gentleman at St. Peter's, or the assembly of the *propaganda fide*, have thought of such sentiments ? And allowing a few individuals the liberality they assume, will this affect Mr Wesley's argument, and prove that it is not a principle of the church of Rome, to " keep no faith with heretics ?" If we recollect right, his correspondent never looked this argument in the face : and though we will not venture to say, that Mr Wesley's consequence, which was, that the popery bill ought not to have passed, necessarily followed from his premises, we will say however, that in spite of all the efforts of his opponent, his chief argument remains untouched.

It is said Mr O'Leary and Mr Berington are liberal, tolerant men. Perhaps they are. But is popery a tolerant religion? If it be, it must be strangely altered! We suspect with Dr Hales, that were the principles which pervade the writings of these apologists for the church of Rome, to be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, or Italian, they would be so far from being considered in these countries as the efforts of missionaries zealous in the catholic cause, that they would infallibly be prohibited by the *congregation of Index* and publicly burnt. We can distinguish between the sentiments of candid and judicious individuals, or of individuals who have a point to carry, and the general established principles of a collective body: and we are the more particular, in these observations, because we are informed, that, since the

bill passed, the catholics, in several parts of the kingdom, have been very busy at their old trade of converting heretics ; and the more effectually to secure an interest in heaven, are particularly assiduous in collecting numbers of protestant children, whose parents are poor, and sending them to schools, where they are carefully instructed in reading, and writing—and popery !

C H A P. VIII.

OF HIS WRITINGS IN GENERAL.

HAVING paid some attention to the controversial pieces of Mr. Wesley, we now consider his writings in general. But an accurate and distinct enumeration were impossible. Never was there, since the days of Richard Baxter, so voluminous a writer. Were all his publications originals, the number would be astonishing. But this is not the case. They are chiefly extracts from various authors, and in every species of composition. Verse and prose, history, divinity, politics, languages, and philosophy

have engaged his attention. Even novels have not escaped him: and Brookes' "Fool of Quality" has suffered an abridgment.

Mr Wesley had peculiar advantages as an author. He had a printing-office under his immediate inspection. The celebrity of his name gave a rapid and extensive sale to his books; and the exertions of the preachers, many of whom had an interest in it, rendered the sale still more extensive than it would otherwise have been. If we may guess from his continual printing, he wished, as much as possible, to direct his people in the choice of their books; and took pains to inculcate his sentiments, as well from the press, as from the pulpit.

Much of his own writings, is in divinity: and his largest work, is the "Notes on the Old and New Testament." They

are short and concise; rather practical than critical, and written, as may be supposed, with a view to his peculiar doctrines. It is not clear, that what he once said of them, that “they are calculated, not to prevent people from thinking, but to assist them,” is strictly, and universally just. If intended for the use of public persons, they are too concise; and, if for families, they are equally liable to the same censure. Their true character is, they are briefly explanatory; with no great depth or ingenuity of criticism; and in general, without any such helps toward a religious improvement, as are to be found in the more useful comments of Henry and Doddridge. Many difficult passages, in which a full and ample elucidation was necessary, are dispatched with a brief hint: and too much is frequently left to the ingenuity of the reader.

er. In a few places, particularly in the New Testament, he has taken the liberty to alter the text; and, in some instances, for the better. His notes on the Apocalypse are chiefly from Bengelius. We notice the quarto edition of the notes on the New Testament, as the most elegantly printed book he ever published, and embellished with one of the best of his early prints, that we have seen.

Next to this, his most distinguished, and certainly his most laboured work, is the treatise on "Original Sin." We are informed, that this, though it did not convince him, procured the esteem of his antagonist, Dr Taylor. It is almost the only effort of Mr Wesley, which has the air of a regular treatise; and on which he has bestowed the time and attention necessary for accurate investigation. It is an animated defence of the orthodox doctrine,

in a deduction from the state of morality in all ages; or as he expresses it, from “scripture, reason, and experience.” Those however, who shall look into it, for specimens of abstract reasoning, will be disappointed. But if any one has an inclination to see the dark side of human nature, and to know how corrupt the world is, and has been, this book is recommended to his particular attention.

An useful, and not the least elegant of his publications, is the “Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation.” Much abuse has been lavished on this work, by some who were judges, and by others, who were not, but spoke after their superiors; chiefly for want of considering for whose use it was compiled. Some of these, who are so ignorant, as not to know to this day, that it is an extract from various authors, ascribe it to Mr

Wesley, as an original work. If we may judge from the execution, it certainly was not intended for adepts, as a complete history of the present state of philosophical knowledge ; for, in this view, it were materially defective : nor can it have been designed as a work merely elementary, and calculated for philosophical pupils ; but rather as a general view of the most useful and remarkable things in natural history, and an illustration, for common use, of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Considered in this light, it is well entitled to the public approbation : and the moral reflections it contains, are as much distinguished by their justness and elegance, as by their utility. Upon the whole, if not an accurate and complete, it is an useful and christian compendium of philosophy.

Of the historical labours of our author, we cannot speak so favourably, as of his other compositions. The history of England is little more than a copy; and what is worse, a mutilated copy of Goldsmith and Walpole: and, notwithstanding the promises in the preface, it is neither a philosophical, nor a religious history; nor, in those parts, which are his own, has it any pretensions to originality, or to any of the requisites for such an undertaking.

The “Ecclesiastical History” is of the same class. It is a mere transcript from other writers, both in sentiment and expression: and so decided is the difference between his own language and the style of these histories, that a reader of any taste cannot fail to observe it; and must smile at their mutual dissimilarity:

“ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne!”

The only original part of this work, is the “History of the People called Methodists:” and, in almost every excellence of narration, it is singularly deficient. It contains little or no reasoning on the policy and principles of methodism. It affords little that is satisfactory to the philosopher, the politician, or the divine. It does not develope the springs of human actions; nor does it describe or vindicate the sentiments he espoused, in such a manner as will satisfy a judicious enquirer. The best account we can give of this narrative, is, that it is a mere itinerary. It is a partial, contracted account, not of methodism, but of himself. But history was no province of his. He had no talent for political or philosophical disquisition: and, whatever may be the fate of his other works, these two compositions stand little chance, ex-

cept among his own followers, of descending to posterity.

Among the political labours of Mr Wesley, may be ranked his “Thoughts on Slavery.” He was one of the earliest writers on a subject, which has lately undergone so complete an investigation; and in which the public have been, for some time, so deeply interested. This pamphlet does him great credit. Though it does not discover that extent of information, and that accuracy of detail, which is observable in Mr Clarkson, and others, who have gone over the same ground, he has treated it with great spirit and impartiality. But, as might naturally be supposed, in a gentleman of his sentiments, he has considered it chiefly in a moral and religious view; not on the mere footing of political expediency, but on principles of equity and natural

justice : and it is supposed, that this essay had a powerful influence on some of the American states, in their late regulations concerning the trade to Africa.

As a piece of polemic divinity, his “Predestination calmly considered,” is of distinguished excellence. It is a model of controversy, clear and cogent; concise and argumentative; and the more convincing, because the spirit, in which it is written, is as amiable, as the reasoning is unanswerable. Perhaps, there is not, in the English language, a treatise, which contains, in so small a compass, so full and masterly a refutation of the principle he opposes. It does credit to his judgment, that he so early espoused, and so ably defended the mild and moderate system of Arminius. The Father of Mercies, reprobating millions of his creatures, before they existed, is a contradiction in

terms : and he presently saw it's absurdity.

In 1777, Mr Wesley engaged in a periodical work, called the "Arminian Magazine." To give it a just character, were no easy task. It is a strange medley of heterogeneous matter, on all sorts of subjects. Part of it is dedicated to extracts in favour of general redemption; another part to sermons by Mr Wesley, and religious letters from his correspondents; and a snug corner is reserved for witches and apparitions. The sale of this work is a remarkable proof of the authority of his name. Standing, as it did, under every possible disadvantage; groaning under the load of a religious controversy, of which every one had been long weary; of hundreds of letters, dull as dullness itself, and with scarcely any variation, either of sentiment or expression;

this magazine, with little pretension to literary merit, is in great demand; many thousands have been annually disposed of, and the demand is continually increasing. How long this will be the case, it is hard to say. Whenever it shall depart this life, it will not meet an untimely end: and unless it alter greatly for the better, it's dissolution will be no loss to the republic of letters.

Among the original works of Mr Wesley, are his sermons, in eight volumes: the last four of which were chiefly composed for the Arminian Magazine, and collected and republished in 1788. The merit of these discourses is various. In general, the last volumes are much superior to the first, both in matter and in expression. They are more informing, as well as more sprightly and entertaining; tho' some critics will object to the frequent

citations from the poets. In these discourses, dress, early rising, and a variety of similar regulations are much insisted on: and though they are subjects not commonly introduced into the pulpit, the sermons, which treat of these, are by no means the least ingenious.

The last of his works, which we shall mention, is “the Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion.” This is esteemed one of his most studied and argumentative publications. To say the least, it is, what he intended, an able defence of his system and his general conduct: and whoever wishes either to vindicate, or to attack methodism, should, by all means, make himself master of this work.

Of the fifty volumes of the “Christian Library,” consisting chiefly of extracts from authors of the last century, and intended as a body of divinity for the use

of the preachers, as well as the people, we shall only say, many of the volumes are so dull, that we have never been able to wade through them : and of the vast variety of small pamphlets, which Mr Wesley published, the reader will easily judge, no particular account can be given, when he is informed, that the number, exclusive of the Arminian Magazine, is upwards of two hundred and sixty. Among these are the Hymns on different occasions, written chiefly by Mr Charles Wesley, which are very numerous, and which we dismiss, with observing, that the “ Funeral and Scripture Hymns ” are in general the best.

The character of Mr Wesley, as a writer, has never yet been appreciated. Among his own people, it has been esteemed perhaps too highly : with the rest of the world, his peculiar sentiments,

and some political pamphlets, which were obnoxious to multitudes of readers, have contributed to set it too low.

In point of style, his most distinguishing character is conciseness. He abhorred circumlocution: and constantly endeavoured to say every thing in the fewest words. Hence he was sometimes abrupt: and the sententious turn of his expressions, gave now and then a sort of bluntness to his writings, and superseded that air of elegance and ease, which, accompanied with a becoming brevity, is peculiarly pleasing. His conciseness, however, did not prevent his perspicuity. Early accustomed to distinction, he knew how to separate ideas apparently similar; and his long habit of considering every subject in it's most simple and direct view, was the true reason, that he rarely fell into obscurity.

It appears, from some expressions in the preface to his late sermons, that he was conscious of a talent in writing, which certainly does not appear in his works; and which, in our opinion, was scarcely consistent, either with his temper or his genius. He says, that he “could write as floridly and rhetorically as the admired Dr Blair!” But the florid is not the style of Blair; which is rather distinguished by a chaste, classic elegance; and does not labour under that profusion of ornament and figure, by which florid writers are distinguished. Nor was he calculated for an imitation of the rhetoric of this author. What he might have done in his youth, we will not say. Had he chiefly dedicated himself to the profession of authorship, and paid the attention necessary to elegance of composition, it is more than probable

he might have succeeded. But this was not the case. He valued himself too much on logic, to pay sufficient attention to the ornamental part of fine writing. As for rhetoric, he always appeared to think too meanly of the art, and to hold it in a degree of contempt, by no means worthy so excellent an understanding.

This remark will receive additional confirmation from a well known anecdote. When Junius appeared, Mr Wesley offered his services, and proposed to administration, to answer him: and, said he, “I will shew the difference between rhetoric and logic.” The proposal was not accepted: and Junius, though frequently attacked, is to this moment unanswered. Nor is it at all probable, that Mr Wesley would have succeeded in the attempt. Logic is not all that is requi-

site in a political writer. Conviction does not necessarily imply persuasion: and the elegant diction, the imposing and insinuating style of some writers, particularly, if accompanied with the epigrammatic smartness and pungency of a Junius, will be more than a match for the argumentation of all the mere reasoners in the universe.

Those, who are in search of the chief excellence of Mr Wesley, as an author, must look for it in his controversial writings. His fort was argument: and his superior skill in this science, gave him a decided advantage over most of his opponents. He availed himself, with equal ease, of fair and direct argumentation, and of the fallacies and subtilties of the art: and he knew how to conceal those subtilties from the eye of a common observer. The most palpable fallacy we re-

member in his writings, is in a debate on christian perfection. And this, say his antagonist, "is Mr Wesley's perfection!" No, replies he; "have I not declared, over and over, that I am not perfect?" He only meant, this was the perfection he inculcated. Mr Wesley, by shifting the terms of the proposition, evaded the argument, and replied to it, as if it meant this was the perfection he professed to have attained!

His love of brevity sometimes led him astray. He often ventured upon assertion without proof. The tutor was in many of his writings too conspicuous: a fault into which he was betrayed, in some measure perhaps, by his consciousness of the truth and propriety of the sentiments he had espoused, and partly, by the superior deference to which he was so long accustomed.

It will frequently strike an attentive observer, that though there is in his writings great force and energy, as well as much perspicuity, yet of the sublime and pathetic beauties of composition, there are few, if any examples. He often succeeded in description, and sometimes in ridicule : but he seldom impresses the mind with the tender and impassioned emotions.

Upon the whole, he was a laborious, useful writer. His works have done infinite good : and though he will scarcely rank in the first class of English authors, his name will descend to posterity, with no small share of respectability and applause. If usefulness be excellence ; if public good is the chief object of attention, in public characters ; and if the greatest benefactors to mankind are most estimable,

Mr John Wesley will long be remembered as one of the best of men, as he was for more than fifty years the most diligent and indefatigable.

C H A P. IX.

A REVIEW OF HIS CHARACTER.

THE character of eminent persons, who have gone before us, is of course an object of the public attention. It may be added, and deservedly so. When the tenor of a virtuous and useful life is crowned with a correspondent end, death sets his seal upon the departed, and gives the rivet of eternity to his virtues. It may be observed also, that, though it be proper, and even necessary to public utility, to draw men, not as they ought to be, but as they are ; and to point out the faults, as well as the excellencies of those, whose actions may be esteemed.

worthy the attention of mankind, we are however, to judge of their character, not so much by particular circumstances, as by the general tenor of their conduct.

From the relation already given of his general views, and of the transactions, in which he bore so distinguished a part, our readers can scarcely fail to have formed some judgment of Mr Wesley's character. But, without personal observation, a just and accurate idea were impossible. And as the opinions of mankind, concerning him, are as opposite as light and darkness, we shall endeavour to present our readers with a full and complete view of this extraordinary person.

The figure of Mr Wesley was remarkable. His stature was of the lowest : his habit of body in every period of life, the reverse of corpulent, and expressive of

strict temperance, and continual exercise: and notwithstanding his small size, his step was firm, and his appearance, till within a few years of his death, vigorous and muscular. His face, for an old man, was one of the finest we have seen. A clear, smooth forehead, an aquiline nose, an eye the brightest and the most piercing that can be conceived, and a freshness of complexion, scarcely ever to be found at his years, and impressive of the most perfect health, conspired to render him a venerable and interesting figure. Few have seen him, without being struck with his appearance: and many, who had been greatly prejudiced against him, have been known to change their opinion, the moment they were introduced into his presence. In his countenance and demeanour, there was a cheerfulness mingled with gravity; a sprightliness,

which was the natural result of an unusual flow of spirits, and was yet accompanied with every mark of the most serene tranquility. His aspect, particularly in profile, had a strong character of acuteness and penetration.

In dress, he was a pattern of neatness and simplicity. A narrow, plaited stock; a coat with a small upright collar, no buckles at his knees, no silk or velvet in any part of his apparel, and a head as white as snow, gave an idea of something primitive and apostolical: while an air of neatness and cleanliness was diffused over his whole person.

His rank, as a preacher, is pretty generally understood. His attitude in the pulpit was graceful and easy; his action calm and natural, yet pleasing and expressive: his voice not loud, but clear

and manly ; his style neat, simple, perspicuous : and admirably adapted to the capacity of his hearers.

His discourses, in point of composition, were extremely different, on different occasions. When he gave himself sufficient time for study, he succeeded ; and when he did not, he frequently failed. A clear proof, that the employments, in which he was engaged, were too numerous, and the œconomy, to which he gave himself up, too tedious and minute, for a man who generally appeared in the pulpit twice or thrice a day. We have frequently heard him, when he was excellent ; acute and ingenious in his observations, accurate in his descriptions, and clear and pointed in his expositions. Not seldom however have we found him the reverse. He preached too frequently ; and the consequence

was inevitable. On some occasions, the man of sense and learning was totally obscured. He became flat and insipid. His observations were trite and common; his expositions of scripture forced and unnatural, and the whole substance of his sermons disjointed and out of course. He often appeared in the pulpit, when totally exhausted with labour and want of rest: for, wherever he was, he made it a point to preach, if he could stand upon his legs. Many have remarked, that when he fell into anecdote and story-telling, which was not seldom, his discourses were little to the purpose. The remark is true. We have scarcely ever heard from him a tolerable sermon, in which a story was introduced. Whether he observed this custom in his youth, we are not informed; but it has been generally considered, as an infirmity of

“garrulous old age;” a mixture of the familiar with the sacred, little worthy the dignity of the pulpit; and tho’ very proper, and perhaps useful in common life, by no means fit for the instruction or entertainment of a judicious audience.

The constant employment of Mr Wesley, in writing letters, or composing, or visiting the sick, was not the only reason he sometimes did not succeed in public. He seems to have thought too little of the preparation, which, in an extemporary speaker, is indispensibly necessary. He regarded the general discipline and œconomy of the societies, as of the greatest moment and difficulty, and the public exercise of his ministry, as the least arduous part of his office: and he informs us in one place, that he could “preach three or four times a day, without any

trouble ;” but that the care of the societies was a burden he could “ scarcely bear.”

Never was the contrast greater between public characters, than between Mr Wesley and Mr Whitefield. The former, when he was himself, had an easy fluency of expression, and an address and manner particularly chaste and natural. He was often logical and convincing, and sometimes descriptive : but he never soared into sublimity, or descended into the pathetic. His style was the calm, equal flow of a placid stream, gliding gently within it's banks, without the least ruffle or agitation upon it's surface. The eloquence of Mr Whitefield was of another kind. It was more various ; and yet, with all it's variety, in him, it was strictly natural. He was a preacher, who alternatly thundered and lightened.

upon his audience ; now filling them with terror, and now touching and affecting them with all the softer and more pleasing emotions. He knew how to inspire them with whatever passion he was desirous to call forth ; and the smiles or tears of his hearers were equally at his command. Though not so accurate a speaker as Mr Wesley ; he was more popular. He had a louder and more musical voice ; his tones were more varied ; his action much more diversified, and his whole address in public, was that of a master in all the arts of popularity. Mr Wesley preached to the learned ; Mr Whitefield to the people. The former gave more satisfaction to a critical hearer ; but the latter was a greater favourite with the public. This was evident in their respective congregations. Each was accustomed to the largest assemblies in the

nation: but the difference was considerable. Mr Whitefield's congregations were frequently twenty or thirty thousand: Mr Wesley's scarcely ever amounted to one third of the number.

Many have represented him as a man of slender capacity; but certainly with great injustice. Of the futility of such representations, his writings, particularly those which are controversial, are a sufficient proof. To this may be added, the office he filled with such distinction at Oxford, and his great address in the management of his people. As a scholar, he was certainly respectable. He was well acquainted with the Latin and Greek classics; and had a tolerable knowledge of the Hebrew, as well as of French, German, Spanish, and Italian. He had studied Euclid, during his residence in college, and had attended with a good

deal of assiduity the philosophic lectures. In philosophy however, he was a sceptic. He did not believe in any system. He denied the calculations of the planetary distances, and the plurality of worlds. But his philosophical knowledge seems to have been rather general, than profound; and in his answers to an opponent who attacked him in the papers on these subjects, we discover no deep research, no acuteness; in a word, nothing that can incline us to suppose, he had made himself master of the arguments, for, or against the different systems, which have been adduced by the various advocates, or that he had formed any new arguments of his own.

To suppose him no very profound philosopher, is no impeachment of his capacity. We have never yet found a man who excelled in every thing: and he who

attempts every thing, must in many instances, be superficial. In philosophical enquiries, a minute and critical attention, frequent repetition of experiment and observation, and the most patient spirit of investigation, are absolutely necessary to distinguished eminence and success: and we need not say, that, to all these, the genius and employments of Mr Wesley were insuperably averse.

As a writer, he certainly possessed talents, both from nature and education, which, had he composed with care, and allowed himself sufficient time, could scarcely fail to have procured him a considerable reputation. But writing, as he did, on the spur of particular occasions, he often dismissed his pieces in a crude, imperfect state, and defective in accuracy and extent of information; which, in the present state of knowledge, cannot

be dispensed with, in candidates for literary fame.

In the bloom of youth, his taste seems to have been more just and discriminating than in his more mature age: whence we conclude, that either the company, with whom he conversed, or the books which he chiefly read, after his commencing itinerant, were not favourable to elegance and refinement. We have seen nothing of his, equal to the translations of Horace, which he wrote in his youth. And it is remarkable, that his essay on taste, and his criticisms on Pope and Prior, published in the Arminian Magazine, are jejune, trifling, and contradictory.

In social life, Mr Wesley was lively and conversible; and of exquisite companionable talents. He had been much accustomed to society; was well acquainted with the rules of good breeding; and,

in general, perfectly attentive and polite. The abstraction of a scholar did not appear in his behaviour. He spoke a good deal in company: and, as he had seen much of the world, and, in the course of his travels, through every corner of the nation, had acquired an infinite fund of anecdote and observation, he was not sparing in his communications; and the manner in which he related them, was no inconsiderable addition to the entertainment they afforded.

His manner, in private life, was the reverse of cynical or forbidding. It was sprightly and pleasant, to the last degree; and presented a beautiful contrast to the austere deportment of many of his preachers and people, who seem to have ranked laughter among the mortal sins. It was impossible to be long in his company, without partaking his hilarity. Nei-

ther the infirmities of age, nor the approach of death, had any apparent influence on his manners. His chearfulness continued to the last; and was as conspicuous at fourscore, as at one and twenty.

A remarkable feature in Mr Wesley's character, was his placability. His temper was naturally warm and impetuous. Religion had, in a great degree, corrected this; though it was by no means eradicated. Generally indeed, he preserved an air of sedateness and tranquility, which formed a striking contrast to the liveliness, so conspicuous in all his actions. Persecution from without, he bore not only without anger, but without the least apparent emotion. But it was not the case in contests of another kind. Opposition from his preachers or people he could never brook. His authority he

held sacred; and, when that was called in question, we have known him repeatedly transported into a high degree of indignation. But what he said of himself was strictly true. He had a great facility in forgiving injuries. Submission, on the part of an offender, presently disarmed his resentment, and he would treat him with great kindness and cordiality. If he ever deviated from this amiable conduct, we ascribe it not to him. It was foreign to himself. It arose from the misrepresentations of sycophants, by one or other of whom, in his latter days, he was perpetually besieged.

The temperance of Mr Wesley was extraordinary. In early life, he seems to have carried it too far. Whether there were some particular reasons, in his case, as some have supposed, from warmth of constitution, or from any other cause,

which might induce him to think it necessary, it were too much, without proper authority, to determine. However this may be, he was for many years, temperate to an excess. Even Dryden's parish priest did not exceed him. He made "almost a sin of abstinence."

The practice of fasting, with other instances of self denial, he began at college, when about three or four and twenty. And as old men generally retain a partiality for the customs of youth, so Mr Wesley, when obliged, for the sake of his health, to observe a more generous regimen, did not fail to inculcate, both in public and private, the most rigid temperance. An œconomy, which possibly might suit some few constitutions; but, to the majority of mankind, must be dangerous, if not fatal. And it is particularly observed, that there is no period of

life, in which a generous diet is more necessary, than when the body is advancing to maturity.

Among other things, he was particular in the article of sleep. One of his maxims was, “without fasting and early rising, it is impossible to grow in grace.” With such views, we need not wonder, that he was so attentive to this himself, and so assiduous and peremptory in enforcing it on others. His notion of sleep cannot be better explained, than in his own words :

“Healthy men require a little above six hours sleep ; healthy women a little above seven, in four and twenty. If any one desires to know exactly what quantity of sleep his own constitution requires, he may very easily make the experiment which I made about sixty years ago. I then waked every night about twelve or

one, and lay awake for some time. I readily concluded, that this arose from my being longer in bed than nature required. To be satisfied, I procured an alarum, which waked me the next morning at seven (near an hour earlier than I rose the day before) yet I lay awake again at night. The second morning I rose at six ; but notwithstanding this, I lay awake the second night. The third morning I rose at five ; but nevertheless, I lay awake the third night. The fourth morning I rose at four, as, by the grace of God, I have done ever since. And I lay awake no more. And I do not now lie awake, taking the year round, a quarter of an hour together in a month. By the same experiment, rising earlier and earlier every morning, may any one find, how much sleep he really wants."

Toward the close of life, he relaxed a little. The sleep he had allowed himself, was not sufficient; so that he was obliged, after dinner, to take a nap in his chair. For some years before his death, he lived, as every man ought, who can afford it, generously, yet temperately. He took two or three glasses of wine after dinner, and two after supper: and eat heartily, and with a good appetite. We much doubt whether he ever drank a pint of wine, at one sitting, in his whole life: and this regularity was rewarded with such a vigour of constitution, as scarcely any one has known but himself. In thirty-five years he never kept his bed one day. In his youth indeed, he was subject to the tooth-ach, and, in his latter years, to the cramp: but, upon the whole, his health was firm and robust, to the utmost degree that can

be conceived. Twice or thrice in his life, in consequence of severe colds, and excessive labour, he was supposed to be consumptive. He had also two or three fevers; which however, seem rather to have strengthened than impaired his constitution. By a violent shock against the pommel of his saddle, he contracted a hydrocele, for which he underwent several operations. But, in June 1775, being seized, in the north of Ireland, with a severe fever, it effectually cured him of this complaint.

Perhaps the most charitable man in England, was Mr Wesley. His liberality to the poor knew no bounds. He gave away, not merely a certain part of his income, but all that he had. His own necessities provided for, he devoted all the rest to the necessities of others. This is a good work, in which he engaged at a

very early period. In the seventh volume of his sermons, is an account of the charities of one of the first methodists. The name is not mentioned : but we suppose it to be spoken of himself. “ When he had thirty pounds a year, he lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year, receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two and thirty. The third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year, he received a hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor ninety-two.” In this ratio he proceeded during the rest of his life : and we are persuaded, that, upon a moderate calculation, he gave away, in about fifty years, twenty or thirty thousand pounds ; which, almost any other than himself, would have taken care

to put out at interest, upon good security. Had the money, he gave away fallen into the hands of some of his principal favourites, and were they to live as long as he did, the sum would certainly have accumulated to sixty or seventy thousand pounds.

Mr Wesley's charity had the fate, in some instances, to be misinterpreted. Some years ago, appeared in the metropolis, Erasmus, bishop of Crete. His episcopal character in the Greek church, was authenticated by a letter from the Patriarch of Smyrna; who added, that the Turks had driven him from his see, for baptizing a mussulman into the faith of Christ. That Mr Wesley's known liberality should induce him to be kind to this venerable stranger, it is easy to conceive; but the report, circulated in the Gospel Magazine, and other publications

of that period, that forty guineas had been offered him by Mr Charles Wesley, to make his brother a bishop, has no appearance of probability. To have wished for so unsubstantial a thing as a Greek consecration, does no credit, either to his head or his heart ; and is indeed as little likely, as the assertion of a certain reverend gentleman, that no one knew “ whether the said bishop was a pick-pocket, or a wandering Jew,” was liberal and christian. But some people will never learn to keep within the bounds of decency. It is to be observed, that several of Mr Wesley’s preachers were ordained by this Bishop. This must have been a curious ordination : and when it is considered, that neither did the Bishop understand English, nor his candidates Greek, we may presume, that the examination, and the rest of the ceremony, on that occa-

sion, must have been particular instructive and interesting!

The travels of Mr Wesley were incessant; and almost without a precedent. Brainerd, the missionary to the American Indians, and Xavier, the apostle of the East, seem more nearly to have resembled him in this instance, than any minister we have heard of, in ancient or modern times. His prodigious labours, without great punctuality and care in the management of his time had been impossible. He had stated hours for every purpose. His times of business and relaxation, were not suffered to interfere with each other. He retired to rest between nine and ten, and rose soon after four: and no company, no conversation, however pleasing; in short, nothing but stern necessity could induce him to relax. His rules were like the laws of the Medes and Persians,

absolute and irrevocable. He wrote, he travelled, he visited the sick, he did every thing in certain hours, which he had prescribed for himself: and those hours were inviolable.

To determine the precise measure of Mr Wesley's labours, were too much to attempt. His public ministrations were but a part of them: but from these we may form some conception of the rest. During fifty two years, he generally delivered two sermons a day; very frequently four or five. Calculating therefore, at twice a day, and allowing fifty sermons annually for extraordinary occasions, which is the lowest computaion that can be made, the whole number, in fifty two years, will be forty thousand, four hundred and sixty. To these may be added an infinite number of exhortations to the societies, after preaching,

and other occasional meetings at which he assisted.

In his younger days, he travelled on horseback. He was a hard, but unskilful rider; and his seat was as ungraceful, as it appeared uneasy. With a book in his hand, and his hands up to his head, he frequently rode from fifty to sixty or seventy miles a day: and from a strange notion he had taken up, of riding with the bridle on his horse's neck, many were the tumbles they had together. Of his travels, the lowest calculation we can make, is four thousand miles annually, which, in fifty-two years, will give two hundred and eight thousand miles. An almost incredible degree of labour; and which nothing, but the best constitution, informed by the most active spirit, could have enabled him to support!

Of the fatigue of writing we think not so much. In original composition, there is a pleasure, which none but writers know. Had he indeed copied the books he abridged, it were a miserable drudgery ! But he took a much shorter method. He just looked over his author, and drew his pen across the passages he disapproved ; and this with so little accuracy, that he frequently left sentiments directly contrary to his own principles.

The temper of Mr Wesley was as disinterested, so far as related to money, as it was charitable. Every one knows the apostrophes in which, more than once, he addressed the public on this subject ; declaring, that his own hands should be his executors ; that, though he gained all he could by writing, and wasted not even so much as a sheet of paper ; yet, by giving all he could, he was effectually

preserved from laying up “treasures upon earth;” and that, if he died worth above ten pounds, independent of his books, and the arrears of his fellowship, he would give the world leave to call him “a thief and a robber.” In this, as all who knew him expected, he has kept his word. His carriage and horses, his clothes, and a few trifles of that kind, are all, his books excepted, that he has left. The value of the books may be easily ascertained. But their value is of no sort of consequence; since they are entirely left to the conference; his relations deriving no advantage from them, except a rent charge of eighty-five pounds, to be paid to his brother’s widow, during her life. If he even had acquired a fortune by his writings, we see no impropriety in it. As things are, we commend his disinterested conduct. Had they been other-

wise, we should not have condemned him.

Among other excellencies of Mr Wesley, we cannot but remark the general moderation of his controversial pieces. Never was there a more scurrilous race, than the greater part of his antagonists. Mr Church and a Mr Thompson, with perhaps one or two more, are the only disputants he engaged with, who preserved the temper and manners, we will not say of christians, but of gentlemen. Considering the illiberal behaviour of these disciples of Zoilus, we almost wonder he should have honoured them with a reply. The little roughness which now and then appears in his writings, was certainly nothing, in comparison of the provocation: and, for the most part, when he "scourged them with whips, he should have lashed them with scorpions:" Whether

fond of controversy or not, he was forced into it; and what he said of one, was true of most of his opponents: “torquebis, ut vapules.” They teased him into debate; and he generally dismissed them with a sound drubbing.

Mr Wesley possessed, during his whole life, a contempt of infidels and free-thinkers, which some may conceive, bordered upon asperity. Infidelity was frequently the subject of his satire. In conversation and in public, he delighted to attack it; and many of his remarks were lively and convincing. But his opposition, now and then favoured of illiberality; nor does he seem to have had just conceptions of the proper antidote. “A pert, shallow, conceited infidel, two degrees below Voltaire,” is neither proper language, nor in any respect descriptive of the elegant and ingenious Rousseau. We

dislike his infidelity : but we revere his eloquence and his genius. The circulation of stories, concerning witchcraft and apparitions, which equally disgrace the journals and the magazines, is no remedy for deism : and whatever Mr Wesley might have thought of their cogency, the deists will scarcely accept them for argument. Be they ever so true, they are not that mode of proof which is proper in this case : for to those, who are believers in revelation, they are unnecessary ; and those who deny the scriptures, are pre-determined to reject them. “ If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Mr Wesley, with many excellencies, had also his singularities. In this class, we reckon his excessive attachment to particular opinions. Like many polem-

ics, who contend for victory, rather than truth, he paid little attention, and gave little weight to arguments, which combated his peculiar sentiments. Frequently, he refused them a hearing. Hence, when any thing was proposed, which he disapproved, or any attempt made to go into a debate on his favourite doctrines, it was common with him to begin a story, or to give out a hymn, and put an end to the conversation. It is said, every man has his hobby-horse. Mr Wesley's was perfection : and he rode it sufficiently. For many years, it was the Shibboleth of methodism. He shewed the most marked attention to those who professed, and an equal coldness to those who opposed it. Perfectionists and Anti-perfectionists were the grand divisions of methodism. The wags laughed merrily at the witnesses of perfection. Even

their brethren, in the societies, “ eyed them askance,” and set a mark upon them: while the Calvinian methodists, in songs and madrigals, and heroics, alternately vented their mirth and their indignation.

A considerable defect in Mr Wesley, is what we would call his superstition. Of this something has been hinted already. Another instance, is his notion of drawing lots. We cannot suppress a smile, at his enumeration of the good effects of his voyage to America. One of these, is the use of the lot. This custom he borrowed from the moravians, and, in dubious cases, frequently adopted it. This is one thing in which Mr Whitefield and he differed: and it was in consequence of drawing lots, to determine whether he should write against predestination, that the Calvinists char-

ged him with drawing lots for his creed.

From the munificence of Mr Wesley, it might be supposed, that he was a man of much softness and sensibility. And yet this does not appear to have been the case. His charities rather seem to have been the result of a sense of duty, than of any peculiar tenderness of nature. He had no attachments, so far as we have been able to discover, that partook of the genius of friendship. His regard for some individuals, proceeded less from personal, than public considerations. All his views were of this kind. His first object, was the success of methodism: and, as he never doubted, that the plans he had formed, were the best that could be devised; so, when any of the preachers were of a different opinion, and refused to concur in his measures, he treated them as the mariners

treated Jonah. He threw them overboard with the most perfect indifference: or, to borrow his own phraseology, he “commended them to God.”

This disposition, whether it be called apathy, or firmness, or by whatever other name, was not peculiar to Mr Wesley. Many great men, especially in the political world, have piqued themselves upon it. Perhaps they think it necessary, that public characters should be superior to the sensations of common life. How far this may be true, we shall not attempt to determine: but we thank God, that we have never had any temptation to adopt the principle.

Mr Wesley was, in some respects, a man of penetration. In one, he certainly was not. His choice of confidants and favourites, did little honour to his sagacity. Whatever knowledge he might

have had of the general motives and principles of human nature, he does not seem to have been happy in penetrating into the views and characters of individuals. Like other sovereigns, he was surrounded by flatterers ; and like them too, he often mistook the incense of adulation, for the cordial offering of sincerity and truth. Frequently he forgot, that, wherever power is lodged, all who have any thing to hope, and are not too spirited and independent to fear, will crowd the levee. The consequence, in his case, was much the same, as in all others. When such persons insinuated themselves into his good graces, the point was effectually to prejudice him against those, who were formidable, by their wisdom and integrity: and, in many instances, they succeeded.

We now come to the last feature in Mr Wesley's character; his love of power. He has been often charged with this propensity; and the charge is not yet refuted. We will say more. We challenge any man to refute it.

Something of this has been intimated before: but as it is a matter of some consequence, and a capital blemish in a character, in other respects estimable, it is necessary to establish it by a candid appeal to facts. It is easy to accuse; and it is equally so to deny: but a series of plain facts, are such decided proofs of the disposition of the agent, that it is impossible to mistake them.

The power, for which Mr Wesley contended, was absolute. It was a power to receive or exclude preachers or people; to call a conference, to appoint the preachers, who should attend it, and, in

general, to do what he pleased, by his own proper authority. There is no trace of such a power in the first minutes of conference, in 1744. By those minutes, equal liberty was established, as a fundamental article: and, in a subsequent conference, Mr Wesley and the preachers mutually “signed an agreement, not to act independently of each other.” As the minute, we have just mentioned, is remarkable for it’s good sense and liberality, we transcribe the passage.

“Question. How far does each agree to submit to the judgment of the majority?”

“Answer. In speculative things, each can only submit so far as his judgment shall be convinced: in every practical point, each will submit so far as he can, without wounding his conscience.

“Question. Can a christian submit

any farther than this, to any man, or number of men upon earth?

“ Answer. It is plain he cannot, either to bishop, or convocation, or general council. And this is that grand principle of private judgment, on which all the reformers proceeded: “ every man must judge for himself; because every man must give an account of himself unto God.”

In this quotation, which we call the *original compact* between the preachers and Mr Wesley, it is remarkable, that the first question supposes the submission of every preacher, and that only so far as is consistent with a good conscience, not to him individually, but to the majority. Most of the *ex post facto* laws, which he established, or endeavoured to establish in the sequel, were so many violations of this compact. It was violated by his introduction of his notes on the New Test-

ament and his volumes of sermons into the deeds of the preaching houses, as the test of sound doctrine, and the rule, on their conformity to which, should depend the admission or continuance of preachers in the connexion. It was violated by the requisition, that the preachers should promise to serve him “as sons in the gospel,” and that they should read such books only as he recommended. It was still farther violated, by his making it a rule, that they should print no books without his permission : and lastly by the arbitrary selection of one hundred preachers as the only members of conference, and by the rasure of the compact itself, from the minutes of conference, on their republication in 1780.

Against this last act, one preacher having remonstrated, was answered ; “ I have not made so bad a use of my pow-

er, as to render this clause necessary:" to which it was very properly returned, "I had rather hold my liberties by the law, than by the favour of any man."

A motion was made, that the minute concerning the right of private judgment, should be reinserted in it's proper place. It was voted in without one dissentient voice: but he took care not to insert it, to the day of his death. To this it may be added, that, at the conference in 1783, Dr Coke attempted, in his name, to introduce a minute, signifying the concurrence of conference, to Mr Wesley's giving *absolute* power to a *select committee*, to conduct the affairs of the societies, after his decease; and another, to call for the deeds of the several preaching houses, out of the hands of the trustees, and to lodge them in an iron safe, under the New Chapel, City Road; of

which safe, the Doctor kept the key! In both these, he was outvoted by a very large majority.

Such are the principles, on which we ground the assertion, that Mr Wesley was fond of power, and that his temper was despotic. When any man attempts the subversion of customs and regulations, as much distinguished by their excellence as their antiquity, it is a natural conclusion, that he is fond of absolute rule, and would substitute others instead of them, less excellent and unexceptionable: and in this case, whoever that man may be, he ought to be opposed in the attempt. In such a contest, he may, if he pleases, brand opposition with the name of rebellion: but we say, it is virtue.

On the authority of the above facts, (and if more were necessary, we can easily produce them) as well as upon the

sanction of some personal knowledge of the man, we must insist, that Mr Wesley was, during the last ten or fifteen years of his supremacy, the most absolute of monarchs. His will was the law. If he ever receded from a resolution, or rescinded a favourite measure, it was not choice, but necessity. If he retreated, it was only for the moment. He never thought his authority secure, but when exerted to the utmost: and therefore, if ever surpris'd into a concession, he took the first opportunity of measuring his steps back again; and, by frequently returning to the attack, he was sure, sooner or later, to carry his point. In a word, the love of power was the chief misery of his life; the source of infinite disgusts; and the most frequent cause of the defections of his friends. Had not his virtues been sullied by this and some other

defects, he had avoided many errors and inconsistencies, into which he has fallen; and we should have given him, without deduction or reserve, the praise, to which his piety, his labours, his learning, and his general ability in the management of his people, had so justly entitled him.

VOL. III.

O

C H A P. X.

HIS LAST SICKNESS AND DEATH.

THE death of Mr Wesley, like that of his brother Charles, was one of those rare instances, in which nature, drooping under the load of years, sinks into the grave, by a gentle decay. Within the last three years, it was particularly visible, in the gradual extinction of memory, a faculty he once possessed in the greatest perfection, and in a general diminution of the vigour and activity he so long enjoyed. His labours however suffered little interruption: and when the summons came, it found him still occupied in his Master's work.

On Thursday, the 17th of February, 1791, he preached at Lambeth, when on his return home, he seemed much indisposed, and supposed he had taken cold. The next day, he preached at Chelsea, with some difficulty; and, in the evening, had a high degree of fever. On Saturday, he read and wrote as usual; dined at Islington, and desired a friend to read to him, from the fourth to the seventh chapter of Job. On Sunday, being quite unequal to his usual employments, he was obliged to keep his room. He slept several hours in the course of the day. Two of his own discourses, on the sermon on the mount, were read to him; and in the evening he came down to supper. On Monday, he was something better, and paid a visit to a friend at Twickenham. On Tuesday, preached at the City Road, and on Wednesday, at Lea-

Whitehead, delivered his last sermon, from
 “ Seek ye the Lord, while he may be
 found ; call upon him, while he is near.”
 On Thursday, he paid a visit to a family
 at Balaam ; from whence he returned,
 extremely ill. His friends were struck
 with the manner of his getting out of
 the carriage, and still more, when he
 went up stairs, and sat down in his chair.
 He sent every one out of the room, and
 desired not to be interrupted by any one
 for half an hour. When that time was
 expired, some mulled wine was brought
 him, of which he drank a little. In a
 few minutes he threw it up, and said,
 “ I must lie down.” Dr Whitehead be-
 ing sent for, on his entering the room,
 he said, “ Doctor, they are more afraid,
 than hurt.” Most of this day he lay in
 bed, with a quick pulse, and a consider-
 able degree of fever and stupor. On

Saturday, he was much in the same state; but on Sunday morning, he seemed better, got up, and took a cup of tea. Sitting in his chair, he repeated those words of his brother Charles,

Till glad I lay this body down,
Thy servant, Lord attend;
And O! my life of mercy crown
With a triumphant end!

Presently, he prophetically exclaimed, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." Con-
versing with some persons, who then entered the room, he was fatigued with the exertion, and obliged to lie down. After lying some time quiet, he looked up, and said, "speak to me, I cannot speak:" and several kneeling down to pray with him, his hearty amen shewed that he was perfectly sensible of what was said. Some time after, he said, "there is no need of

more. When at Bristol (alluding to an illness in 1783) my words were,

I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me !”

He then questioned his niece, Miss Wesley, concerning early rising. His head now began to be a little affected; and during the delirium, he fancied himself going to preach, or to meet the classes, or engaged in some or other of his usual employments. Sitting towards the evening in his chair, he said, “ what are all the pretty things at Balaam to a dying man ? ” And again he repeated the lines cited above.

On Monday the 28th, the physician and his friends being desirous another should be called in, he refused, saying, “ Dr Whitehead knows my constitution better than any one. I am perfectly sa-

tified ; and will not have any one else.” Most of this day, he slept and spoke but little. Once he said, in a low but distinct manner, “there is no way into the holiest, but by the blood of Jesus.” This was a restless night. It is remarkable, that during his illness, he never complained of pain, but once ; when he said, that he felt a pain in his left breast, when he drew his breath. In the morning he began, and sang two verses of a hymn. Lying still, as if to recover strength, he called for pen and ink ; but when it was brought, he could not write. Soon after, he said again, “I want to write.” Paper being set before him, and a pen put into his hand, he said, “I cannot.” A person said, “let me write for you, Sir. Tell me what you would say.” Nothing, replied he, “but that God is with us.” In the forenoon, he said, “I will

get up :” and while they were preparing his clothes, he broke out, in a manner that astonished all who were about him, in singing,

” I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers :
My days of praise shall ne’er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.

Being asked, whether he desired, in case of his removal, that any or all the preachers should be convened, he answered, “no, by no means ; let all things remain as concluded at the last conference.” Soon after, he was observed to change for death. He broke out into prayer, and then began to sing. His voice now beginning to fail, he gasped for breath, and said, “now we have done all. Let us all go.” He was now laid

on the bed, from which he rose no more. After some time, he called to those who were with him, to “pray and praise.” He spoke to a friend concerning the key and contents of his bureau; and said, “I would have all things ready for my executors.” Here his voice failed again; but, taking breath, he added, “let me be buried in nothing but what is wool-len; and let my corpse be carried in my coffin into the chapel.” He then called upon them to “pray and praise,” and, took each by the hand, and affectionately saluting them, bade them farewell. Attempting soon after to give some farther directions, he was incapable of doing it; but raising his arm, he said, “the best of all is, God is with us.” Something being given him to wet his lips, he said, “it will not do; we must take the consequence. Never mind the poor carcase.”

Two or three standing near the bed, and his sight now nearly gone, he asked, “who are these?” Being told, his brother’s widow was come, he said, “he giveth his servants rest;” thanked her, as she pressed his hand, and endeavoured to kiss her. His lips being again wet, he repeated his usual grace; “we thank thee, O Lord, for these and all thy mercies; bless the church and king, and grant us truth and peace, through Christ our Lord.” After some pause, he said, “the clouds drop fatness. The Lord is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” He then again called them to prayer, and repeated amen to their petitions.

Most of the following night, he often attempted to repeat the psalm he had sung before; but could only get out, “I’ll praise, I’ll praise.” On Wednesday

morning, his end drew near. His old friend, Mr Bradford, who, with the affection of a son, had attended him for many years, now prayed with him; and the last word he was heard to articulate, was "farewell." On this morning, the second day of March 1791, a few minutes before ten, while a number of friends were kneeling around his bed, he expired without a groan. Thus ended the useful, laborious life of Mr Wesley.

The death of this good man, for such he certainly was, was an admirable close of so astonishing a scene of pious and industrious zeal. Having taken so large a view of his character, and laid such a variety of facts before the public, we decline summing up the evidence, or compressing into narrower limits, the substance of the preceding observations. But, by way of compensation, we present

our readers with two sketches ; the first of which, though drawn with the warm colouring of a friend, and consequently a little overcharged, is upon the whole, no bad likeness of a man, who will be considered by posterity, as one of the most distinguished characters of the eighteenth century.

This was written by a physician, some years ago, on a premature report of his death : who, we hope, will have the goodness to excuse some few alterations we thought it necessary to make.

“ Now that Mr John Wesley has finished his course upon earth, I may be allowed to estimate his character, and the loss the world has sustained by his death. Upon a fair account, it appears to be such, as not only annihilates all the reproaches that have been cast upon him ; but such as does honour to mankind, at

the same time that it reproaches them. His natural and acquired abilities were both of the highest rank. His apprehension was lively and distinct; his learning extensive. His judgment, though not infallible, was in most cases excellent. His mind was stedfast and resolved. His elocution was ready and clear, graceful and easy, accurate and unaffected. As a writer, his style, though unstudied and flowing with natural ease, yet for accuracy and perspicuity, was such, as may vie with the best writers in the English language. Though his temper was naturally warm, his manners were gentle, simple, and uniform. Never were such happy talents better seconded by an unrelenting perseverance in those courses, which his singular endowments, and his zealous love to the interests of mankind marked out for him. His constitution

was excellent : and never was a constitution less abused, less spared, or more excellently applied, in an exact subservience to the faculties of his mind. His labours and studies were wonderful. The latter were not confined to theology only, but extended to every subject that tended, either to the improvement or the rational entertainment of the mind. If we consider the reading he discovers by itself, his writings and his other labours by themselves, any one of them will appear sufficient to have kept a person, of ordinary application, busy during his whole life. In short, the transactions of his life could never have been performed, without the utmost exertion of two qualities, which depended, not upon his capacity, but on the uniform steadfastness of his resolution. These were inflexible temperance, and an unexampled œcono-

my of time. In these he was a pattern to the age he lived in ; and an example, to what a surprising extent a man may render himself useful in his generation, by temperance and punctuality. His friends and followers have no reason to be ashamed of the name of Methodist, he has entailed upon them : as, for an uninterrupted course of years, he has given the world an instance of the possibility of living, without wasting a single hour ; and of the advantage of a regular distribution of time, in discharging the important duties and purposes of life. Few ages have more needed such a public testimony to the value of time ; and perhaps none have had a more conspicuous example of the perfection, to which the improvement of it may be carried.

“ As a minister, his labours were unparalleled, and such as nothing could

have supported him under, but the warmest zeal for the doctrine he taught, and for the eternal interests of mankind. He studied to be gentle, yet vigilant and faithful towards all. He possessed himself in patience, and preserved himself unprovoked, nay, even unruffled in the midst of persecution, reproach, and all manner of abuse, both of his person and name. But let his own works praise him. He now enjoys the fruit of his labours, and that praise, which he sought, not of men, but of God.

“To finish the portrait. Examine the general tenor of his life, and it will be found self-evidently inconsistent with the imputation of his being a slave to one passion or pursuit, that can fix a blemish upon his character. Of what use were the accumulation of wealth to him, who, through his whole course, never allowed

himself to taste the repose of indolence, or even of common indulgence in the use of the necessaries of life? Free from the partiality of any party, the sketcher of this excellent character, with a friendly tear, pays it as a just tribute to the memory of so great and good a man, who, when alive, was his friend."

The other is a slighter sketch; but so far as it goes, sufficiently accurate: and we flatter ourselves, that the judicious reader will consider it, if not a perfect, yet a beautiful picture of this extraordinary person.

"Very lately, I had an opportunity, for some days together, of observing Mr Wesley with attention. I endeavoured to consider him, not so much with the eye of a friend, as with the impartiality of a philosopher; and I must declare, every hour I spent in his company, af-

forded me fresh reasons of esteem and
 veneration. So fine an old man I never
 saw. The happiness of his mind beamed
 forth in his countenance. Every look
 shewed how fully he enjoyed the gay
 conscience of a life well spent; and where-
 ever he went, he diffused a portion of his
 own felicity. Easy and affable in his de-
 meanour, he accommodated himself to
 every sort of company, and shewed how
 happily the most finished courtesy may
 be blended with the most fervent piety.
 In his conversation we might be at a loss
 whether to admire most, his fine classical
 taste, his extensive knowledge of men
 and things, or his overflowing goodness
 of heart. While the grave and serious
 were charmed with his wisdom, his spor-
 tive sallies of innocent mirth delighted
 even the young and thoughtless; and

both saw, in his uninterrupted chearfulness, the excellency of true religion. No cynical remarks on the levity of youth embittered his discourse. No applausive retrospect to past times marked his present discontent. In him, even old age appeared delightful, like an evening without a cloud ; and it was impossible to observe him, without wishing fervently, “ may my last end be like his ! ”

“ But I find myself unequal to the task of delineating such a character. What I have said, may appear to some as panegyric ; but there are numbers, and those of taste and discernment too, who can bear witness to the truth, though by no means to the perfectness of the sketch I have attempted. With such I have been frequently in his company ; and every one of them, I am persuaded, would

subscribe to all I have said. For my own part, I never was so happy, as while with him, and scarcely ever felt more poignant regret, than at the parting from him; for I well knew, “I never should look upon his like again.”

If, in the course of these memoirs, we have sometimes commended, and sometimes censured, we have endeavoured to do it with impartiality. We have intended, not a novel, but a history: and therefore, though we have described Mr Wesley, as a man of great virtues and abilities, we have not considered him as a perfect character. The above sketches take in only the brighter and more amiable features. Like some portraits of Elizabeth, they are all light, and no shade. But without the latter, the picture were imperfect. This defect we have endeavoured to avoid: and Mr Wesley is

accordingly represented as a man of great zeal for religion, of indefatigable labours, of much benevolence, and, in general, a most able leader of a party : but, on the other hand, it is shewn, that he was subject to some frailties, which prove, that, though a great and excellent person, he was not superior to the imperfections common to mankind.

Such a subject could not be treated with the freedom of historical discussion, without giving offence. We are sorry that it is so. We were aware of it from the beginning ; and can only say, the intention was not to offend, but merely to do justice to the subject, by telling the truth ; and that, so far only, as appeared necessary. In some instances, we have leaned to the side of extenuation ; but hope we have not exaggerated in any thing.

To shew that Mr Wesley has kept his word with the public, and was in fact as free from any disposition to the accumulation of wealth, and the aggrandizement of his family, as he professed, we subjoin a copy of his will.—Of the future state of methodism, we shall say nothing at present. In this matter, almost everything will depend on the resolutions of the ensuing conference.

F I N I S.

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, A. M.

In the Name of God, Amen !

I JOHN WESLEY, Clerk, sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, revoking all others, appoint this to be my last Will and Testament.

I give all my Books now on sale, and the copies of them (only subject to a rent charge of 85l. a year to the widow and children of my Brother) to my faithful friends, John Horton, Merchant, George Wolff, Merchant and William Marriott, Stock-broker, all of London, in trust for the general Fund of the Methodist Conference in carrying on the work of God, by Itinerant Preachers, on condition that they permit the following Committee, Thomas Coke, James Creighton, Peard Dickinson, Thomas Rankin, George Whitfield, and the London Assistant for the time being, still to superintend the Printing Press, and to employ Hannah Paramore and George Paramore as heretofore, unless four of the Committee judge a change to be needful *.

* Since the death of the Rev. Mr Wesley, a

I give the Books, Furniture, and whatever else belongs to me in the three houses at Kingwood in trust to Thomas Coke, Alexander Mather, and Henry Moore, to be still employed in teaching and maintaining the children of poor travelling Preachers. †

I give to Thomas Coke, Dr John Whitehead,

Deed bearing date Oct. 5. 1790, and executed by him before two witnesses hath appeared, wherein he gives all these books, stock in trade, &c. to Thomas Coke, Alexander Mather, Peard Dickinson, John Valton, James Rogers, Joseph Taylor, and Adam Clarke, in TRUST for carrying on the Work of God, by Itinerant Preachers; subject to the rent-charge above mentioned, or the principal sum, with all debts and legacies specified in the Will.

N- B. The intention of this Deed, with respect to the application of the produce of the books, &c. is exactly the same as expressed in the Will: and the Executors and Trustees are perfectly agreed, and resolved to act in concert in fulfilling the desire of the deceased.

† There is also a Deed of Lease and release executed by Mr Wesley on the 25th of February, 1786, whereby he grants, bargains and sells unto Thomas Coke, Alexander Mather, and James Rogers, all his right, title, estate, &c. to the School at Kingwood and the Premises there, with the furniture, books, &c. for the same use as is declared in the Will, concerning the books and furniture.

and Henry Moore all the Books which are in my Study and Bedchamber at London, and in my Studies elsewhere, in trust for the use of the Preachers who shall labour there from time to time.

I give the Coins, and whatever else is found in the drawer of my Bureau at London, to my dear grand daughters Mary and Jane Smith.

I give all my Manuscripts to Thomas Coke, Dr Whitehead, and Henry Moore, to be burnt or published as they see good.

I give whatever Money remains in my Bureau and Pockets at my decease to be equally divided between Thomas Briscoe, William Collins, John Easton, and Isaac Brown.

I desire my Gowns, Cassocks, Sashes, and Bands, may remain at the Chapel for the use of the Clergymen attending there.

I desire the London Assistant for the time being to divide the rest of my wearing apparel between those four of the travelling Preachers that want it most ; only my Pellise I give to the Rev Mr Creighton : my Watch to my friend Joseph Bradford : my Gold Seal to Eliz. Ritchie.

I give my Chaise and Horses to James Ward and Charles Wheeler, in trust, to be sold, and the money to be divided, one half to Hannah Abbott, and the other to the poor members of the Select Society.

Out of the first money which arises from the sale of Books, I bequeath to my dear sister Martha Hall (if alive) 40l. to Mr Creighton aforesaid 40l. and to the Rev. Mr Heath 60l.

And whereas I am empowered by a late Deed to name the persons who are to preach in the New

Chapel at London (the Clergymen for a continuance) and by another Deed to name a Committee for appointing Preachers in the New Chapel at Bath, I do hereby appoint John Richardson, Thomas Coke, James Creighton, Peard Dickinson, Clerks, Alexander Mather, William Thompson, Henry Moore, Andrew Blair, John Valton, Joseph Bradford, James Rogers, and William Myles, to preach in the New Chapel at London, and to be the Committee for appointing Preachers in the New Chapel at Bath.

I likewise appoint Henry Brooke, Painter, Arthur Keen, Gent. and William Whitestone, Stationer, all of Dublin, to receive the annuity of 5l. (English) left to Kingwood School by the late Roger Shiel, Esq ;

I give 6l. to be divided among the six poor men, named by the Assistant, who shall carry my Body to the grave ; for I particularly desire there may be no hearse, no coach, no escutcheon, no pomp, except the tears of them that loved me, and are following me to Abraham's bosom. I solemnly adjure my Executors in the name of God, punctually to observe this.

Lastly, I give to each of those travelling Preachers who shall remain in the Connection six months after my decease, as a little token of my love, the eight Volumes of Sermons.

I appoint John Horton, George Wolff, and William Marriott, afore said, to be Executors of this my last Will and Testament, for which trouble they will receive no recompence till the Resurrection of the Just.

Witness my hand and seal the 20th day of February, 1789.

JOHN WESLEY. (seal.)

Signed, sealed, and delivered, by the said Testator as and for his last Will and Testament, in the presence of us

WILLIAM CLULOW,
ELIZABETH CLULOW.

Should there be any part of my personal Estate undisposed of by this my Will: I give the same unto my two Nieces E. Ellison, and S. Collet, equally.

JOHN WESLEY.

WILLIAM CLULOW.
ELIZABETH CLULOW.

Feb. 25. 1789.

I give my Types, Printing-Presses, and every thing pertaining thereto to Mr Thomas Rankin, and Mr George Whitfield, in trust for the use of the Conference.

JOHN WESLEY.

JOHN HORTON,
GEORGE WOLFF,
WILLIAM MARRIOTT,

} EXECUTORS.

JOHN RICHARDSON,
JAMES CREIGHTON,
PEARCE DICKINSON,
JAMES ROGERS,
JOHN BROADBENT,
DUNCAN WRIGHT,
THOMAS RANKIN,
JOSEPH BRADFORD,
GEORGE WHITFIELD.

ERRATA.

VOL. I.

Page 8. l. 6. *read* calf skull.

24. l. 12. *r.* ardent and exemplary.

ibid. l. 19. *r.* so affecting.

74. l. 6. *r.* as well for your past kindness,
as for, &c.

134. l. 9. *r.* from which.

152. l. 1. *r.* reasoning.

212. l. 4. *r.* influence of this fire.

220. l. 13. for immediately *r.* intimately.

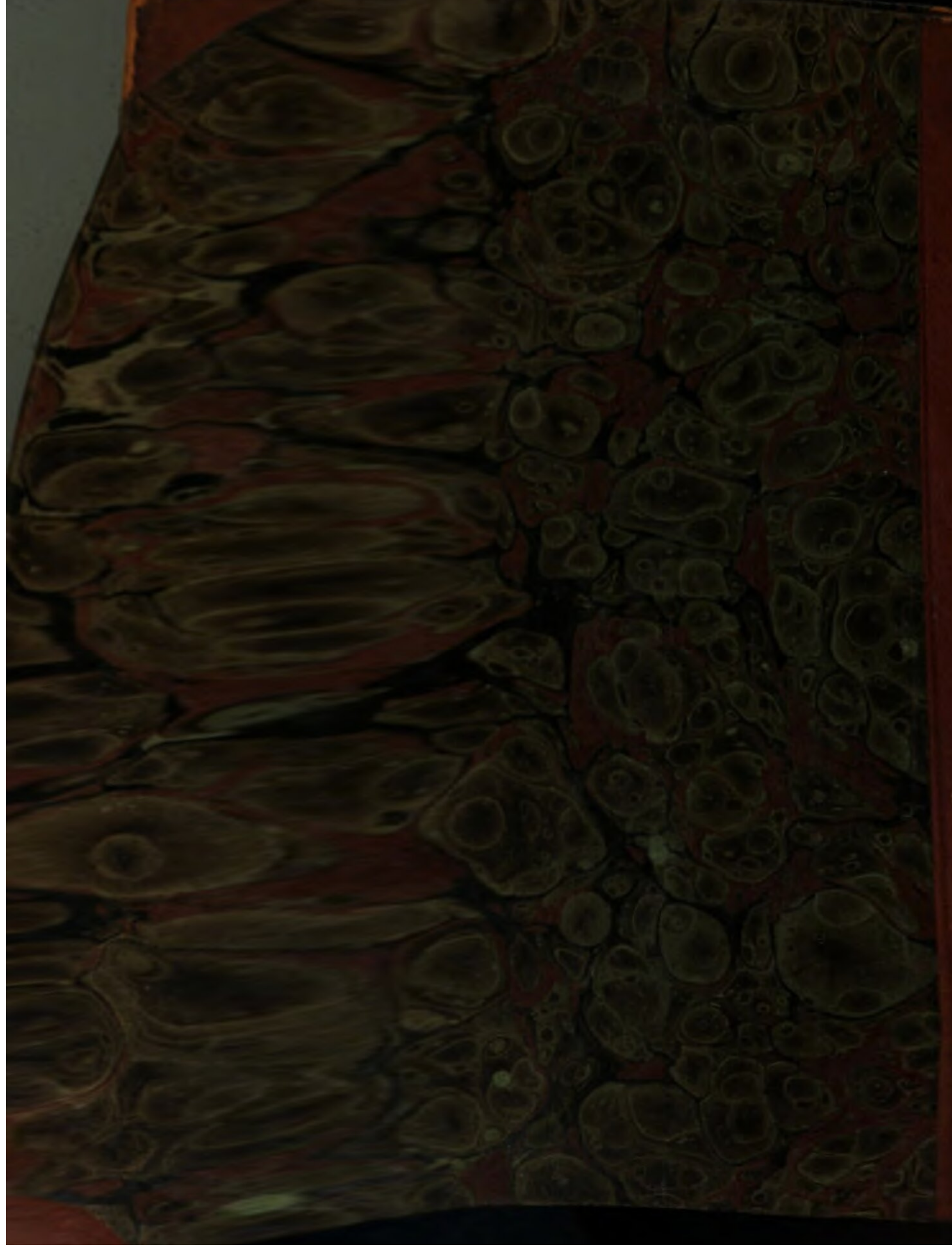
VOL. II.

Between p. 64 and 65. supply the word *assurance*.

107. l. 6. for any *r.* an.

VOL. III.

Page 41. l. 3. *r.* love of applause.



Wesley, John, 1703-1791

Memoirs Of The Late Rev. John Wesley, A. M With A Review Of His Life And
Writings, And A History Of Methodism, From it's Commencement in 1729, to
the present time
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